JOHN HERRING

A WEST OF ENGLAND ROMANCE

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JOHN HERRING

A WEST OF ENGLAND ROMANCE

BY THE

AUTHOR OF 'MEHALAH'

IN THREE VOLUMES

VOL. II.

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THE SECOND VOLUME

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JOHN HERRING.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE CUB.

Mirelle was conscious of a change in Trecarrel towards her. She ceased to engross his attentions, which were now directed towards Orange. She could not recall anything she had said or done that would account for this change. When the Captain was alone with her, he was full of sympathy and tenderness as before, but this was only when they were alone. Trecarrel argued with himself that it would be unfair and ungentlemanly to throw her over abruptly. He would lower her into the water little by little, but the souse must come eventually. Some of the martyrs were let down inch by inch into boiling pitch, others were cast in headlong, and the fate of the latter was the preferable,

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and the judge who sentenced to it was the most humane. Mirelle suffered. For the first time in her life her heart had been roused, and it threw out its fibres towards Trecarrel for support. She was young, an exile, among those who were no associates, and he was the only person to whom she could disclose her thoughts and with whom she could converse as an equal. He had met her with warmth and with assurances of sympathy. Of late he had drawn back, and she had been left entirely to herself, whilst his attention was engrossed by Orange Tramplara.

But Orange, with no small spice of vindictiveness in her nature, urged the Captain to show civility to Mirelle. She knew the impression Trecarrel had made on her cousin's heart, and, now that she was sure of the Captain, she was ready to encourage him to play with and torture her rival. Women are only cruel to their own sex, and towards them they are remorseless.

'Do speak to Mirelle, she is so lonely. She does not get on with us. She does not understand our ways, she is Frenchified,' said Orange, with an amiable smile. The Captain thought this very kind of his betrothed, and was not slow to avail himself of the permission. Nevertheless, Mirelle perceived the

insincerity of his professions. She was unaware of the engagement. This had not been talked about, and was by her unsuspected. Orange was well aware of the fascination exerted over Trecarrel by Mirelle; she knew that her own position with him had been threatened, almost lost. She was unable to forgive her cousin for her unconscious rivalry. She did not attempt to forgive her. She sought the surest means of punishing her. Mirelle was uneasy and unhappy. She considered all that had passed between her and Trecarrel. He had not professed more than fraternal affection, but his manner had implied more than his words had expressed. She became silent and abstracted, not more than usual towards the Trampleasures, for she had never spoken more than was necessary to them, nor had opened to them in the least, but silent before Trecarrel, and abstracted from her work at all times. The frank confidence she had accorded him was withdrawn, their interchange of ideas interrupted. She found herself now with no one to whom she could unfold, and she suffered the more acutely for having allowed herself to open at all. She began now to wish that John Herring were nearer, and to suspect

that she had not treated him with sufficient consideration.

Mirelle was not jealous of Orange: she was surprised that Captain Trecarrel should find attractions in her. Mirelle had formed her own conception of her cousin's character; she thought her to be generous, warm, and impulsive; coarse in mind and feeling, but yet kindly. How could a gentleman such as the Captain find charms in such a person? Mirelle did not see the money, nor did she measure correctly the character of Orange.

About this time young Sampson Tramplara began to annoy her with his attentions, offered uncouthly. The youth was perfectly satisfied with himself, he believed himself to be irresistible and his manner to be accomplished. He was wont to chuck chambermaids under the chin, and to lounge over the bar flirting with the 'young lady' at the tap, but was unaccustomed to the society of ladies, and felt awkward in their presence.

Mirelle at once allured and repelled him. He could not fail to admire her beauty, but he was unable to attain ease of manner in her presence. She seemed to surround herself with an atmosphere of frost that chilled him when he ventured near. After a while, when the first unfamiliarity had worn off, through

meeting frequently at meals and in the evenings, he attempted to force himself on her notice by bragging of his doings with dogs and horses, addressing himself to his father and mother, but keeping an eye on Mirelle and observing the effect produced on her mind by his exploits.

After that he ventured to address her; to admire her embroidery, her tinsel flowers, her cut-paper lace, and to pass coarse flatteries on them and her; and when this only froze her into frostier stiffness, to attempt to take her by storm, by rollicking fun and insolent familiarities.

He was hurt by the way in which she ignored him. He never once caught her eye when telling his best hunting exploits. His raciest jokes did not provoke a smile on her lips. He could extract from her no words save cold answers to pointed questions.

Her position in the house became daily less endurable, and she could see no means of escape from it. She had appealed to her guardian to allow her to return to the convent of the Sacred Heart, but had met with a peremptory refusal. A fluttering hope had sprung up that Trecarrel might be her saviour, a hope scarce formulated, indistinctly existing, but now that had died away.

Once she appealed to Mr. Trampleasure against his son. She begged that he would insist on young Sampson refraining from causing her annoyance by his impertinence. But she obtained no redress. 'My dear missie! the boy is a good boy, full of spirit. He comes of the right stuff—true Trampleasure, girl! We don't set up to Carrara marble here. You must treat him in the right way. Flip him over the nose with your knitting pins, or run your needle into his thumb, and he will keep his distance. You can be sharp enough when you like, and say words that cut like razors. Try some of your smartness on Sampy, and he will sneak away with his ears down. I know the boy; he is not smart at repartee. You should have heard how Polly Skittles set him down t'other day.'

'Pray, who is Polly Skittles?'

'The barmaid at the Pig-and-Whistle.'

'I decline absolutely to take lessons from a Pig-and-Whistle barmaid how to deal with a booby.'

'Missie!' exclaimed the old man, flaming red. 'You forget—he is my son.'

'No one could possibly doubt it,' said Mirelle, and walked away.

After that, so far from old Tramplara

making his son desist from annoying Mirelle, he egged him on to it. The old man's pride was hurt at the scorn with which the girl treated both him and his son—a scorn she took no pains to conceal.

'Look you here, Sampy,' said Tramplara, 'if the girl is to be had, you had better say Snap. There is her six thousand pounds, which must be kept in the family. True by you, it is now sunk in Ophir; but I expect some day to bring it out of Ophir turned into twelve thousand. If she marries, her husband will be demanding the money, and that might lead to unpleasantness. As Scripture says, "Live peaceably with all men," and I say the same, when money is involved. I will tell you something more. I do not believe, I cannot believe, that six thousand pounds represent the total of old Strange's estate. There must be more money somewhere—perhaps in a Brazilian bank; and all that is wanted is for one of us to go over and find out. You won't convince me that a diamond merchant doing a roaring trade for a quarter of a century made no more than six thousand pounds. I have always heard that the diamond trade is a very beautiful and delicate business, giving rich returns. With caution you manage to get as many diamonds out of

the niggers as from their masters, and you pay five shillings to the former where fifty pounds won't satisfy the latter. I leave you to guess what profits are made. If we had not our hands full of Ophir, I would go myself to Brazil, or send you, to see about James Strange's leavings. Six thousand pounds! Why, that is what he sent over to meet present contingencies. He intended drawing the rest when settled. Mark this, Sampy. Should a breath of cold air come down off the moors on Ophir, and somewhat chill that warm concern, so as to make it advisable for either or both of us to take a turn out of England—Brazil is the word.'

'Have you written to Brazil?'

'Of course I have. To the English Consul at Bahia, and have offered to tip him handsomely if he sends me word that old Strange left money there. But I have had no answer as yet.'

As the attentions of young Tramplara became more offensive and more difficult to avoid, Mirelle appealed in despair to Captain Trecarrel.

'My dear Mirelle, what can I do? He is the son of the house, and I visit there. If I were to quarrel with him, I should be forbidden the house, and then,' with a tender

look out of the Trecarrel blue eyes, 'I should see no more of you.'

'I thought gentlemen could always take action in such matters. Voyez! In France I step up to a gentleman, and say, That person yonder has looked at me insultingly. Then the gentleman who is a perfect stranger goes across the street and knocks down the insolent one.'

'That would involve an action for assault, and the estate would not bear it,' said Trecarrel, sadly. 'If it were worth a couple of hundred more, I might do it. I know an excellent fellow who knocked a young farmer head over heels in the graveyard on leaving church, because he had looked from his pew admiringly at the young lady this gentleman was about to marry. He compromised the matter by getting a commission for the young farmer, but it cost him a lot of money. These are not the days, my dear Mirelle, when *any* man may be heroic; heroism is only compatible with a balance at the bank. I'll tell you, however, what I can do, and that I will do, as it falls within my means to do it. I will invite young Sampson to a supper at the King's Arms, and I will then talk the thing over reasonably with him. Put your mind at ease. I have great influence

with the cub, who looks up to me as a sort of model, and I do not doubt that I shall induce him to desist from his attentions.'

But Captain Trecarrel had overrated his influence. The cub continued his offensive conduct.

One day when he had intruded on her in the summer-house, where she was writing at her desk—her father's desk—she suddenly recalled Herring's interference at West Wyke.

'What — writing a love-letter,' asked young Sampson, lounging on the table opposite her, and trying to look into her eyes. 'Oh dear, how I wish it was to me!'

Mirelle lifted the flap of the writing-case, and took out the small square ruler, and with her finger pushed it across the table in the direction of Mr. Sampson, without raising her eyes from the writing.

Young Tramplara looked at the ruler, then at Mirelle. She took no more notice of him, except that she wrote on a piece of folded paper the name and address of John Herring, and when Sampson attempted again to speak she tossed the paper before him and pointed to the ruler.

He rose scowling. He perfectly understood what she meant: another impertinence, and she would write to John Herring to

break that ruler across his skull. Her coolness, her utter contempt for him, the galling of his pride, filled him with rage; but he was a coward, and so he rose from his seat, thrust his hands into his pockets, and sauntered out of the summer-house whistling 'The girl I left behind me.'

CHAPTER XXII.

MOONSHINE AND DIAMONDS.

Mirelle and Orange were dressing for the ball in the same room; that is, Orange had come into the room of Mirelle for her to do her hair. Mirelle was perfect in this art; her delicate fingers turned the curls in the most graceful and becoming arrangement. This was an art above the sweep of the powers of the maid-of-all-work. Orange, in return, offered to do Mirelle's hair.

'But Mirelle, my dear Mirelle! You look like a ghost, all in white. Not a particle of colour! It does not suit you; you are so pale. Good heavens! let me look at your hands.' Orange took the long narrow fingers in hers, and held the delicate hand before the candle. It was transparent, and thus only did it show a rosy red.

'Unless I had seen it, I would not have believed that there was blood in you,' said Orange; and then she glanced at herself

proudly in the cheval glass. 'Do look at me, Mirelle. I am glowing with life. See my lips, my cheeks—how warm they are! My eyes flicker, whereas you are as though spun out of moonshine. There is not the faintest rose in your cheek, and your lips alone show the least tinge of life. Your eyes have no sparkle in them ; they are dark pools in which nothing lives. I wish you would stand between me and the lamp ; I believe I should see the light through you. Whoever saw flesh like yours ? It is not flesh, it is wax. You must paint. You are unendurable like this—like a corpse of a bride risen from her coffin come to haunt the living.'

'I shall put on my diamonds,' said Mirelle.

'What diamonds ?'

'My mother's.'

'I did not know you had them.'

'Yes, I kept them with my own things, in my own box. When my mother died they were committed to me.'

'You cannot wear diamonds ; a girl in England does not put on jewelry.'

'I am going to wear them.'

Then Mirelle opened a little case, and drew from it a coronet and a necklace of diamonds.

'Fasten the crown about my head,' she said; 'I can put the necklace on myself.'

Orange stepped back in astonishment. She had never seen anything so beautiful.

'Why, Mirelle, they must be very valuable. How they twinkle, how they will sparkle downstairs among the many lights.' Then with a touch of malice, 'What will Captain Trecarrel think? Now you look like a queen of the fairies. He will fairly lose his heart to you to-night.'

She saw a spot of colour come into each cheek. It angered her, and she went on with bitterness in her soul, 'You know that you belong to his class; and he will think so as well to-night. I suppose he and you will despise us humble folk who have to do with trade and business, and you will have eyes only for each other. What a couple you will make, side by side, he with his aristocratic air, and you bejewelled like a princess!'

She looked at herself in the glass and then at Mirelle, and was reassured. No comparison could be drawn between them. She, Orange, was splendid. She wore pink with carnation ribands, and a red rose in her hair, another in her bosom. Her dark and abundant hair and her large dark eyes looked

well, set in red. The colour in her cheeks was heightened. Her bosom heaved, she had a fine bust and throat, and her features were handsome. There was life, love, heat in her. Who could care for a snowdrift—nay, for a frozen fog, though it sparkled ?

'Come down, Mirelle: it is time. I have already heard one carriage drive up. How we shall get every one who is invited into this house I do not know.'

'I will go down presently. You go on without me. I am not wanted as yet.'

Mirelle did not descend for half an hour.

When she entered the room where the guests were assembled, it was full. She did not look round her except for a seat, and when she had discovered one she walked to it. She knew nothing of the persons there: they were excellent on their appropriate shelf, but their shelf was not her shelf.

Trecarrel and Herring were both present, and saw her. They had been watching for her to come in. Her appearance surprised them. In the well-lighted room, in her white muslin, with white satin bows, and with her head and delicate throat glittering with diamonds, she seemed a spirit ; a spectral White Lady. Her face was as colourless as her dress, save for the fine blue veins that marked her

temples. She seemed too fragile, too ethereal to belong to the earth. Her beauty was of an order rare in England, unknown in the West.

Captain Trecarrel started forward. 'Countess Mirelle,' said he, 'you are unprovided with a flower. Am I too impertinent if I offer you one? I thought you might possibly be without, and I have brought you a spray of white heath. Will you accept it?'

She raised her eyes, smiled somewhat sadly at him, and took the sprig with a slight bow. Then she put it to her bosom. As she was doing so, her eye encountered that of Herring, who stood by. She recalled his offer of white heath made on the day of her father's funeral.

'It brings good luck,' said Trecarrel. The same words that Herring had employed. Mirelle's hand trembled, and she looked timidly, flutteringly, at Herring.

'Ah!' said he, 'all the bells have fallen off.'

Then she said, in a half-pleading tone, 'Mr. Herring, I was once very rude and very wrong when I refused the same from you. Now I am rightly punished.'

She removed the sprig. 'You see, Captain,' she said, as she handed it back to Tre-

carrel, 'the heath has rained off all its white bells. I am not destined to receive good luck from either you or Mr. Herring. I thank you for the kind attention. I cannot wear the heath now.'

'Are you engaged for the first dance?' asked Herring.

Mirelle looked at Trecarrel, who turned his head away. He must, of course, open the ball with Orange. After a pause, in a tone tinged with disappointment, she said she was not engaged, and Herring secured her.

The appearance of Mirelle in the ball-room caused general surprise. It was an apparition rather than an appearance. The prevailing opinion admitted her beauty, but decided that it was of too refined and pure a type to be pleasing; it was a type suitable for a statue but not for a partner. Men love after their kind; blood calls for blood, not for ice.

The ladies discussed her diamonds, and concluded unanimously that they were paste. No one allows to another what he does not possess himself.

'You know, my dear, she comes from Paris, and in Paris they make 'em of paste for tenpence to look as natural as real stones worth a thousand pounds.'

'But her father was a diamond merchant.'

'True by you, but these stones were her mother's I make no doubt, and that mother was a gambling old Spanish Countess, who would sell her soul for money. I've heard Mr. Trampleasure say as much.'

'She don't look as if she had any constitution to speak of,' observed one old lady.

'That transparent skin,' answered another, 'always means that the heart is bad. I ought to know, for my uncle was a chemist. The highest person in the land—and when I say it, I mean the highest—came into my uncle's place one morning and asked for a seidlitz-powder, and he took it on the premises, and he told my uncle that he never took a better seidlitz in his life.'

'She is proud as Lucifer,' said one. 'Look! she's gone and refused Mr. Sampson Tramplara. That is too bad, and she owes her meat and bread, and the roof that covers her, to the charity of his father.'

'He is getting angry,' said the lady whose uncle was in the chemical line. 'Sampson is not one who can bear to be treated impolitely.'

'She will dance with no one but that strange gentleman whom they call Herring,

and Captain Trecarrel. Stuck up because of her rank, I suppose.'

'Ah! as if her rank was anything. The highest in the land spoke quite affable to my uncle, and said his seidlitz was the best seidlitz he had ever drunk.'

'Do you call Mr. Sampson handsome?'

'Handsome! I should rather say so; and better than that, he will be rich.'

'Better than all, he will be good,' said a serious lady, Mrs. Flamank, impressively.

'The highest in the land put down two-pence for his seidlitz like any other man. But that seidlitz cost my uncle five-and-twenty pounds, for he paid that sum for a Royal arms, lion and unicorn and little dog all complete, to put up over his shop door; and an inscription, "Chemist (by appointment) to His Royal Highness." But I never heard that it brought him more custom. Still, there was the honour, and if that were a satisfaction to him, I don't blame him.'

'What do you think of Orange Tramplara hooking the Captain?'

'The hooking was quite as much on his side as on hers. He is poor as a rat, and she wants position, so the transaction is one of simple sale and barter.'

'The highest in the land,' began again the lady whose uncle had been a chemist; but at these words the ladies broke up their party round her, and escaped to other parts of the room.

Sampson Trampleasure would not take his refusal. He stood by the side of Mirelle, his cheek flushed, and his eye twinkling with anger.

'I don't see why you should dance with some gentlemen and refuse others,' he said sulkily.

'I have refused no gentleman,' answered Mirelle, looking across the room.

He was too stupid to understand the rebuff. He persisted in worrying her. 'Well,' he said, 'if you won't stand up with me, you must let me take you to supper.'

She was silent a moment, raised her eyes timidly and entreatingly to John Herring, and said, 'I am already engaged.' Herring coloured with pleasure and stepped forward to her assistance.

'You must not tease the Countess,' he said. 'She confesses that she is not strong and able to dance often. She has fixed on the number of dances she will engage in, and more fortunate applicants have forestalled you, and put their names on her card. You have only

yourself to blame that you did not press your claim in proper time.'

'I say,' observed Sampson, with an ugly smile on his lips, 'Mirelle, don't you go dancing too often with Trecarrel. Orange won't like it. When a girl is about to be married to a man, she don't like to have another girl coquetting with her deary.'

'Mr. Sampson Trampleasure,' said Herring, stepping forward, 'this is your father's house, and I——' but Mirelle's hand grasped his arm, and arrested what he was about to say. He looked round. At the same moment a pair of waltzers caught Sampson, and with the shock he was driven into the midst of the whirling circle, when he was struck by another couple, and sent flying at a tangent to the door.

Herring looked at Mirelle. She was trembling slightly, and her face was, if possible, whiter than before. Dark shadows formed under her eyes, making them look unusually large and bright.

She did not speak, but continued grasping Herring's arm, unconscious what she was doing; he could feel by the spasmodic contraction of her fingers that she was more agitated than she allowed to appear. He stood patiently at her side, seeing that she was dis-

tressed, and supposing that the insolence of young Tramplara was the occasion of her distress.

Presently she recovered herself enough to speak. She put her handkerchief to her brow, and then, with feminine address, gave her emotion an excuse that would disguise its real cause.

'He offends me,' she said; 'I am unaccustomed to this sort of treatment. Some persons when they go among wolves learn to howl. With me it will be a matter of years before I can school myself to endure their bark. I have lived hitherto in a walled garden among lilies and violets and faint sweet roses, and suddenly I am transplanted into a field of cabbages, where some of the plants are mere stumps, and all harbour slugs.' She paused again. Just then Trecarrel came up. She let go her grasp of Herring's arm. She had forgotten that she was still holding it. Trecarrel came smiling his sunniest, with his blue eyes full of languor. As he approached she shrank back, and then drew herself up.

'I think, Mirelle,' said he, 'you are engaged to me for the next quadrille.' He was looking at her diamonds and appraising them; and he wondered whether, after all, he had

not made a mistake in taking Orange instead of Mirelle.

'If I were her husband,' he considered, 'I could keep a tight hand on Tramplara, so that he could not very well make away with the six thousand pounds. I wish I had known of these diamonds a few weeks ago.'

Mirelle looked at him steadily. She had by this time completely recovered her composure. 'Am I to congratulate you, Captain Trecarrel?'

'What on?' he asked.

'I have just learned your engagement to Orange.'

'That is an old story,' he said, getting red; 'I thought you were admitted into the plot six months ago.'

'I did not know it till this minute.'

'There is the music striking up. Will you take my arm?'

'I must decline. I shall not dance this quadrille. See, Orange is without a partner.'

She rose, and to avoid saying more walked into the hall, and thence, through the front door, upon the terrace. The moon was shining, and the air without was cool. In the ball-room the atmosphere had become oppressive.

'Would you kindly open the window?'

asked Orange, turning to Herring, and casting him a smile. She was standing up for the quadrille with her Captain. The young man at once went to the window and threw it open.

The night was still without. A few curd-like clouds hung in the sky ; the leaves of the trees, wet with dew, were glistening in the moonlight like silver. Far away in the extensive landscape a few stars twinkled out of dark wooded background, the lights from distant villages.

There was a vacant settee in the window, and Herring sat on it, leaning on his arm, and looking out.

Poor Mirelle ! What could be done for her ? Her position was intolerable. The only escape that he could devise was for her to return to West Wyke. But was it likely that Mr. Trampleasure would consent to this ? And in the next place, would Cicely Battishill care to receive her ?

'Mr. Herring,' said Orange, 'a gentleman is needed to make up a set. May I introduce you to Miss Bowdler ?'

Of course he must dance, and dance with the fascinating Bowdler—a thin young lady, with harshly red hair, red eyelashes, a freckled skin, and eyes that had been boiled in soda.

Miss Bowdler was the daughter of a banker, an heiress, and Trecarrel had thought of her, but could not make up his mind to the colourless eyes and red lashes.

Herring danced badly. His thoughts were not in the figures, nor with his partner. He mistook the figures. He spoke of the weather, and had nothing else to say. Miss Bowdler considered him a stupid young man, and that this quadrille was the very dullest in which she had danced. When it was over, he returned to the window, and as there was an end of the settee unoccupied, and the rest of it was occupied by the chemist's niece and a raw acquaintance to whom she was telling the story of the highest in the land—'And when I say the highest, I mean the highest,'—and his seidlitz, Herring was able to take his place at the window without being obliged to speak to any one. He looked again into the moonlight, and towards the dark woods of Werrington, still revolving in his mind the question, What was to become of Mirelle? He saw that she would take the matter into her own hands and insist on being allowed to go elsewhere. She could not remain in a house where the son was allowed to treat her with insolence. She would like to return to France, to her dear convent of the Sacré Cœur. The thought was

dreadful to Herring, for it implied that he should never see her again.

He fancied, whilst thus musing, that he heard voices on the terrace, and next that he caught Sampson Tramplara's tones. He did not give much attention to the sounds, till he heard distinctly the bell-like voice of Mirelle, 'Let go this instant, sir!'

He sprang to his feet and was outside the window in a moment. He had been sitting looking in the opposite direction from that in which he heard the voices; now he turned in the direction of the garden house.

At the door of this summer-house he saw young Tramplara, and the white form of Mirelle. The moon was on her, and her head sparkled with the diamonds of her coronet, but there was no corresponding sparkle about her neck.

Herring flew to the spot, and saw that young Sampson had snatched the necklet from her throat. The diamond chain hung twinkling from his hand.

'Restore that instantly,' said Herring, catching the young man's hand at the wrist. 'You scoundrel, what are you about?'

'Keep off, will you!' said the cub. 'I should like to know your right to interfere between me and my cousin, Mirie Strange.

I only want to test the stones of her chain. The chaps in the dancing-room say they be paste and a cussed sham. I reckon their mothers have put them up to it. I've got a bet on with young Croker, and I want to try if they'll scratch glass, that is all. So now will you remove your hand and take yourself off?'

Herring doubled up Tramplara's hand, and wrenched the necklace from it.

'Take your chain, Countess. And now for you, you ill-conditioned cur, I warn you. Touch her again, and I will fling you over the wall. Offer her another insult, and you shall suffer for it. If I spare you this time it is because this is your father's house, and I have been his guest. But I will not eat at his table again, that I may reserve my liberty of action, and have my hands free to chastise you should you again in any way offend the Countess Mirelle Garcia.' He turned to Mirelle. 'I once before offered you what help and protection it was possible to me to render, and now I renew the offer.'

'Oh, Mr. Herring,' said she, 'before, I refused your offer very ungraciously. I said then that I was able to help myself. I did not then know the rude elements with which I should have to contend, and I was unaware

of my own weakness. Now, with my better knowledge, I accept your offer.'

'Thank you,' he replied: 'you make me this night a very proud man.'

'Mr. Herring,' she pursued, 'I will give you at once the only token I have that I rely upon you. This person who snatched the jewels from my neck, if capable of such an act as that, is capable of another.' Her voice came quick, her bosom heaved, the angry blood was hammering at her temples. 'I do not believe that these diamonds are secure in this house. If he could wrench them from my throat, he would take them from my trunk. Voyez! je vous donne toutes les preuves possibles que j'ai de la confiance en vous.' She disengaged the tiara from her hair. 'There, there!' she said hastily, 'take both the crown and the necklace. I intrust them to you to keep for me. I know that I can rely upon you; I do not know in whom else I can place trust. All are false except you: you are true.'

'Countess! I cannot do this.'

'Why not? Do you shrink already from exercising the trust you offered?'

'Not so, but——'

'But I entreat you,' she interrupted with

a trembling voice. 'Ces diamants-ci appartenaient à ma mère—à ma chère, chère mère ; c'est pour ça qu'ils ont tant de valeur pour moi.' She forced a smile and made a slight curtsey, and turned to go.

Young Sampson Tramplara was standing near, scowling. Mirelle's eyes rested on him.

'Mr. Herring,' she said, 'should I need your help at any time, may I write ?'

'Certainly, and I place myself entirely at your service.'

Young Tramplara burst into a rude laugh.

'The guardianship of the orphan was committed to Tramplara, then it passed to Tramplara and Herring, and now, finally, it is vested in Herring alone.'

To what extent the guardianship of that frail white girl had passed to Herring, to what an extent also he had become trustee for her fortune, neither she nor Sampson Tramplara guessed. He had uttered his sneer, but the words were full of truth.

Then there floated faintly on the air, whether coming from the house or from without could not be told—mingling with the dance music, yet distinct from it—the vibrations of

metallic tongues in a musical instrument like an Æolian harp, and the tune seemed to be that of the old English madrigal—

Since first I saw your face, I resolv'd
To honour and renown you!
If now I be disdain'd, I wish
My heart had never known you.

CHAPTER XXIII.

PASTE.

Mirelle was subjected to no annoyance after the ball, for both old Tramplara and his son were at Ophir nearly the whole of their time. They returned occasionally to Launceston, but never together. One was always left in charge of the mine, and this was usually young Sampson. When he did come home, he kept out of the way of Mirelle, and old Sampson was too much engrossed in his gold mine to think of her.

She lived in the house, but hardly belonged to it. Her life was apart from all its interests, pursuits, and pleasures. She spoke little and showed herself seldom. Orange was full of her approaching marriage, and could give attention only to her dresses. Her friend and confidante, Miss Bowdler, was constantly there, discussing the bridal garments and the costume of the bridesmaids. In her own little pasty mind Miss Bowdler har-

boured much rancour and verjuice. She was envious of Orange's happiness ; she had herself aspired to Trecarrel, and she felt no tender delight in the better success of Orange. But she disguised her spite for the sake of Sampson, whom she hoped to catch, now that Trecarrel had escaped her net. Orange knew perfectly the state of the Bowdlerian mind, but that mattered little to her. Women naturally hate each other, and are accustomed to live in an atmosphere of simulated affection. She wished greatly to secure the Bowdler for Sampson, so as to bring money into the family.

Mrs. Trampleasure was a harmless old woman, who sniffed about the house, being troubled with a perpetual cold in the head and a perpetual forgetfulness of the handkerchief in her pocket. Mrs. Trampleasure had got very few topics of conversation, for her limits of interest were few—little local tittle-tattle, and the delinquencies of Bella, the maid-of-all-work.

The horrible evening concerts were discontinued, and Mirelle ventured to sit at the piano and play for her own delectation, knowing that Orange was too wrapped up in her new gown, and Mrs. Trampleasure too absorbed in counting the stitches of her knit-

ting, to give her a thought. Whenever the Captain appeared, Mirelle retired either to her room or to the summer-house. Whether in one or the other, she sat at the window, looking out but seeing nothing, her chin in her hand, steeped in thought.

Any one who had watched Mirelle from her arrival in England would have noticed a change in her face. It was more transparent and thinner than before. But this was not that which constituted the principal change. The face had gained in expression. At first it was impassive; now it was stamped with the seal of passive suffering, a seal that can never be disguised or effaced. According to Catholic theology certain sacraments confer character, and these cannot be iterated. But the sacrament of suffering confers character likewise, and it can be repeated again and again, and ever deepens the character impressed. This stamp gave to Mirelle's face a sweetness and pathos it had not hitherto possessed. Before this time a cold and haughty soul had looked out of her eyes, now warmth had come to that frozen soul, and it was flowing with tears. She was still proud, but she was no longer self-reliant. Hitherto she had repelled sympathy because she had felt no need for it, now her spirit had become

timorous, and though it still resented intrusion it pleaded for pity.

As she sat, evening after evening in the window, doing nothing, seeing nothing, her thoughts turned with painful iteration to all that had passed between herself and Captain Trecarrel since they had first met. For a few days after the ball she was resentful. She considered that he had treated her badly; he had attempted, and attempted successfully, to win her heart, and he had gained his end without making a return of his own. He had been cruel to her.

After a while, however, she saw the whole course of affairs in a different light. It struck her that in all probability he had been engaged to Orange—tacitly, may be, and not formally—for a very long while. Something that Orange had said led her to suppose this, and she remembered that the Captain had admitted as much in his answer at the ball when she congratulated him on his engagement. 'That is an old story,' he had said; 'I thought you had been admitted to the plot six months ago.' If he really had been engaged to Orange ever since she had known him, his conduct was explicable in a manner that cleared him of blame. He had looked on Mirelle as one about to become a cousin by marriage.

Mirelle was much with Orange, and therefore it was his duty to be kind to her, and to act and speak to her as to a relation of her who was about to become his wife. Perhaps Orange had considered how unpleasant it would be for Mirelle to remain in Dolbeare after she had gone, and had proposed to the Captain that she should accompany them to Trecarrel. If that were so, and it was very probable, the Captain's solicitude to be on a friendly footing was explained, so was also the interest he took in her money affairs.

'If I had only known!' sighed Mirelle. 'If I had only guessed that they were engaged, I would never have been led to think of him in any other light than as a sort of brother or dear friend and adviser. Why did Orange not tell me?' But when she felt disposed to reproach Orange, she was conscious that she was unjust. She and Orange had not been more than superficially friendly. She had kept Miss Trampleasure at a distance, and had declined to open her heart to her. What right then had she to expect the confidence of Orange? Both the Captain and his betrothed no doubt supposed from the first that Mirelle was aware of the engagement, or at least suspected it; and he was friendly because he

knew that his friendliness was incapable of misconstruction. The colour tinged Mirelle's brow and cheeks, and the tears of humiliation filled her eyes.

She endeavoured to undo the past by forcing herself to think of Captain Trecarrel as the betrothed of Orange, but it is not easy to tear a new passion out of the heart that is young and has never loved before. The heart of Mirelle was not shallow, and feelings once received struck deep root.

It was a comfort to her that Orange was too much occupied in her own concerns to notice that she was unhappy; it was at least a satisfaction to be able to bleed without vulgar eyes marking the blood, and rude fingers probing the wound.

At first, when she thought that Captain Trecarrel had trifled with her affections, she had felt some bitterness spring up in her soul towards him, but when she had changed her view of the situation, and his conduct was explicable without treachery, the idol that had tottered stood again upright, and, alas! remained an idol.

In reviewing the events of the ball, she saw now that she had acted very unwisely. She had offered an unpardonable insult to the family with which she was staying, and which

was, in its clumsy way, kind to her. Young Sampson had found his way to the dining-room before supper, and had helped himself to the wine. She had seen him in the empty room engaged on the various decanters; she had seen him, for the room was on the ground-floor, with large French windows opening on to the terrace. After he had tried the wines, Sampson had come out to Mirelle, and, attracted by the sparkle of the diamonds, had demanded whether they were paste or real stones. She had refused to answer him, and he had put out his hand to take the chain, saying that he would soon ascertain by trying them on a window-pane. She was not justified in thinking that he intended to keep them. She was not justified in supposing that they would not be safe from his cupidity in her trunk. When she had said as much in her anger and excitement, she had offered him, and through him the whole family, a gross and unwarranted insult; and this insult she had accentuated in the most offensive manner by giving the jewels to a stranger to keep for her.

Mirelle put her hands over her face. She was ashamed of what she had done. She had acted unworthily of herself. If Sampson had insulted her with brutality, she had dealt him

in return a mortal blow. Her only consolation was, that neither Orange nor Mrs. Trampleasure knew of the incident, and she hoped that Sampson, for his own sake, would not tell his father.

She made what amends she was able, but it cost her proud spirit a struggle before she could bring herself to it. One Sunday that young Sampson was at home, when he was alone in the office, she went into the room and stood by the table at which he was writing. He looked up, but had not the grace to rise when he saw who stood before him. Her eyes seemed preternaturally large, and her lips trembled; she had her delicate fingers folded on her bosom.

'Mr. Sampson,' she said, in a voice that shook in spite of her effort to be firm, 'I apologise to you for what I said. You had offended me, but the punishment exceeded your deserts.'

'What did you say? And when?'

'I am speaking of the evening of the ball. You acted rudely in wrenching off my necklace, and I spoke hastily respecting your conduct. The language I used on that occasion was injudicious and wrong.'

He looked at her puzzled. Then, with an ugly smirk, he said, 'So, as you have failed to

catch the Captain, you want to be sweets with me!'

Is it ever worth while stooping to conciliate the base? The ignoble mind is unable to read the promptings of the generous spirit. Mirelle was learning a lesson, as John Herring was learning his, both in the same school—the school of life, and the lessons each learned were contrary to those they had been taught in childhood. They were finding out that those lessons were impracticable, at least in the modern world.

Mirelle recognised that she had made a mistake. The noble mind must fold its robes about it, and not soil them by contact with the unworthy. She withdrew with her cheek tingling as though it had been smitten.

Young Tramplara began to fawn on Miss Bowdler, and she to flirt with him, in the presence of Mirelle. This was meant on his part as a token to Mirelle that he was acceptable to other ladies, and that they had charms for him. The uncouthness of young Sampson, the squirms and languishings of the red-eyelashed heiress, his heavy jokes and her vapid repartees, were grotesque, and would have provoked laughter, had not Mirelle been too refined to find amusement in what is vulgar.

Mr. Sampson returned to the 'diggings,' and his absence brought relief to Mirelle.

Captain Trecarrel had been away for some days, staying in Exeter. On his way thither he visited Ophir, and got some of the gold-grains from the working. Ophir puzzled him; Ophir hung on his heart. It oppressed his mind; it was a constant source of uneasiness to him. He resolved on his return from Exeter to revisit it. But if he had his doubts, others had not; that was clear from the current of visitors setting that way, and the influx of applications for shares. Shares went up. Money came in, not in dribblets but in streams; it had not to be squeezed out, it exuded spontaneously.

In Exeter Captain Trecarrel had the gold tested. It was gold, not mundic; not absolutely pure gold, there was copper with it, but still it was gold. Trecarrel got rid of the gold-grains to the jeweller in part payment for a ring to be presented to Miss Orange. He also purchased a handsome China mantelshelf ornament as a present for Mrs. Trampleasure. He got it cheap because the handle was broken off. He ordered it to be packed and sent to Launceston to the old lady. Then, when the box was opened, the handle would be found broken off, and the blame would be laid on

the carrier. Unfortunately, however, the tradesman wrapped the handle as well as the ornamental jar in silver paper—each in a separate piece.

When the box arrived and was opened, a laugh was raised over the handle. Then it struck Mirelle that she ought to make a present to Orange on her marriage. But what could she give her? She had no money. Then she thought of her diamonds, and resolved to ask Mr. Herring to detach the pendant from her necklet and send it her. This she would give to Orange. She took out her desk and wrote the letter. It was a formal letter, but the ice was broken, she had begun to write to him, and cold though the communication was, the receipt of the letter filled Herring with delight. He at once complied with her request.

Orange was profuse in her thanks. She kissed Mirelle, and admired the brooch. Miss Bowdler was at Dolbeare at the time, and both looked at it in the window, with many whispers and much raising of eyebrows.

That same afternoon Mirelle was with Orange and the Bowdlers. 'Thank you so very much,' said Orange. 'I shall value the pendant quite as much as though the stones were real diamonds.'

'They are real,' said Mirelle.

'The French make these things so wonderfully like nature, that only experts can tell the difference,' said Miss Bowdler.

'I suppose these were some of your mother's stones,' said Orange.

'They were,' answered Mirelle.

'How generous, how kind of you to give them to me,' said Orange, without a trace of sarcasm in her voice—(English can make paste imitations as well as the French)—'And though these are only paste, still, I dare say no one will know the difference.'

'They are real stones,' said Mirelle, haughtily.

'My dear,' answered Orange, 'do you know what a Cornish compliment is? "Take this, it is of no more use to me." If these had been genuine diamonds you would have kept them for yourself; they would have been far too valuable to be parted with lightly. No one gives away anything but what is worthless. Look at Trecarrel's china jar. He got it cheap because it was faulty. He gave it to mother because he was bound to make her a present; if she had been worth money, he would not have sent her a worthless gift, but because she has nothing he sends her a nothing. That is the way of the world.'

'The stones form part of a set my father sent from Brazil to my mother in Paris.'

'Nevertheless they are imitations,' said Orange. 'I took them to the jeweller here, because, you see, my dear, if they had been diamonds, I could not have accepted such a costly present from you, but he unhesitatingly pronounced them to be paste. That, however, does not matter to me; it justifies my accepting and keeping the charming present, which will always be valued by me, not for the intrinsic worth, but as a memorial of your love.'

'Give me the pendant instantly,' said Mirelle, full of pride and anger. 'It is impossible that my father, a diamond merchant, could have offered my dear suffering mother such an insult as to send her a set of sham diamonds.'

She took the ornament, and went at once to the jeweller. She came away resentful and humbled. 'That Mr. Strange should have dared!'

Not for a moment did it occur to her that perhaps her mother had sold the stones, and replaced them with paste.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE OXENHAM ARMS.

As the time for his marriage approached, Captain Trecarrel's uneasiness increased. On his way back to Launceston from Exeter he got off the coach at Whiddon Down, determined to have another look at Ophir. He had heard a good deal about Ophir in Exeter, and not much in its favour. His lawyer whom he had consulted had a rich fund of reminiscences concerning Tramplara. Lawyers as a rule are not squeamish, but there was something about old Tramplara which was not to the taste of the solicitor Trecarrel employed. He had been engaged in a Cornish mining action in which his client had prosecuted Tramplara; a good deal had transpired on this occasion not encouraging to those about to transact business with Mr. Tramplara. Much had come out, but more had not come out, but was perfectly well known to those engaged in the case.

'My advice to you is, give a wide berth to the man.'

'I am going to marry his daughter,' answered Trecarrel, ruefully.

'Oh!'—a pause ensued. 'How about settlements?'

'I am all right there,' said the Captain; 'till five thousand pounds is paid down, I do not put my neck into the noose. They may bring me to the altar, but I will fold my arms and sit down on the steps. They cannot legally marry a man against his will.'

'How about the family——' began the lawyer.

'Thank God, I don't marry the family,' interrupted Trecarrel. 'When I have the money and the girl—she is not bad-looking, and will pass muster when clipped and curry-combed—I kick the rest over.'

'Well, I wish you joy.'

Captain Trecarrel next consulted his banker, and found that the money world was shy of Ophir, and held Tramplara in much the same esteem as did the legal world.

'Who are the directors of the company?' asked the banker.

'There is a provisional list,' answered Trecarrel. 'Old Tramplara tried hard to get me on to it, but vainly is the trap set in the

sight of the bird. Here is the prospectus. You see the names: Sampson Trampleasure, of Dolbeare, Launceston, Esq., Arundell Golitho of Trevorgan, Esq., the Rev. Israel Flamank, and some others of no greater importance. I have Tramplara's own copy, that is to say, one he favoured me with, and, as you see, he has pencilled in a few more names. Here is Mr. Battishill of West Wyke, the owner of the estate, but whether he is already a director, or only a possible director, I do not know.'

'Who is Arundell Golitho, Esq., and where is Trevorgan?'

'Never heard of the man, nor of the place.'

When Captain Trecarrel got off the coach, he saw Herring waiting for the coach, to intrust the diamond pendant to the coachman for transmission to Mirelle.

'Halloo! you here?' exclaimed the Captain; 'I thought you lived at the extremity of the known world, at Boscastle.'

'So I do; but I am here starting a mine.'

'Not a director of Ophir, eh?' asked Trecarrel, eagerly, his blue eyes lighting up.

'No, I am not so ambitious as to embark in gold, I content myself with lead; but if

my lead mine promises less than Ophir, its performance, I trust, will be more sure.'

'Ah,' responded Trecarrel, dismally, 'you are bitten with the prevailing distrust. I presume you have not taken shares in Ophir.'

'No; have you?'

'I am going to take a big share in the concern. I marry the Queen of Sheba. Herring, I say, is there a public house near where I can get a chop? I am hungry and wretched. Come with me for charity's sake and let us have a talk together about this same Ophir. I want your opinion; and look here, I have old Tramplara's list of directors, and on it in pencil is the name of Squire Battishill of West Wyke. He is a respectable man, is he not? You know him.'

'Yes; I am staying with him.'

'What sort of a man is he?'

'A gentleman every inch,—honourable and true.'

'Oh yes, I don't mean that. They be all honourable men, especially the Hon. Lawless Lascar, who figures on the list. Is he a man of fortune? If Ophir goes "scatt," as they say here, is there property on which the shareholders can come down?'

'Mr. Battishill is certainly not a director.'

'He is pencilled down as one, at all events, and pencilled by Tramplara himself. Tell me, is there a decent inn hereabouts?'

'There is a very tolerable inn in Zeal, if you do not mind descending a steep hill to reach it—the Oxenham Arms.'

'Come with me.'

Zeal is a quaint village of one street, that street being the high road from Exeter to Launceston. Since the time of which we treat the high road has been carried by a new line above the village, which has been left on one side forgotten, and has gone quietly to sleep. In the midst of the street stands a small chapel built of granite, and before it an old granite cross mounted on several steps. The houses are of 'cob,' that is, clay, white-washed and thatched, with projecting chambers over the doorways resting on oak posts or granite pillars. Below the chapel stood the stately mansion of the Burgoynes facing the road, with vaulted porch, mullioned windows, and sculptured doorways. The Burgoyne family has gone, and now there swings over the entrance a board adorned with the arms of the Oxenham family. The manor-house has descended to become the village inn.

Into this inn, clean, but humble in its

pretensions, Herring introduced the Captain.

'I say, girl,' called Trecarrel to the maid, 'throw on some logs; the turf only smoulders. And bring me some hot water and rum. I am cold and damp, and altogether dispirited and drooping. Let me have a steak as soon as you can.' Then to Herring: 'I am put out confoundedly. Ophir will not digest. Tell me candidly your opinion.'

'You are not treating me fairly,' said Herring. 'You have no right to ask me this question when you are about to become closely allied to Mr. Trampleasure——'

'Oh, confound Tramplara. I am not going to marry him, nor his sniffing wife, nor his cub of a son, heaven be praised! nor, better than all, Ophir. Nevertheless I want to know something about Ophir, for though I am going to be allied to the family, I do not want to be linked by so ever small a link to a concern that may smash, least of all to one that is not exactly on the square. What do you make out about the gold mine?'

'It puzzles me. I have been over it and seen the gold dust washed out of the gozzen.'

'So have I.'

'And yet I am not satisfied.'

'Nor am I.'

'In the first place, I mistrust the way in which Ophir has been puffed and brought into the market.'

'I do not believe a word about the Phœnicians,' said the Captain.

'Again,' Herring went on, 'who have taken the mine in hand?'

'That I can tell you. There is Arundell Golitho, Esq. of Trevorgan. Do you know him? You are a Cornish man, bred in its deepest wilds. Does he hail from your parts?'

'Never heard of him.'

'Nor has any one else, that I can learn. Then there is the Reverend Israel Flamank, but he counts for nothing. He is a crack-brained preacher, not worth a thousand pounds, and every penny he has he has sunk in Ophir.'

'Here is another: the Honourable Lawless Lascar. Who is he?'

'I have heard about him from my lawyer in Exeter,' said Trecarrel. 'Lends his name to rickety ventures for a consideration, and when wanted, not at home.'

'And Colonel Headlong Wiggles?'

'Colonel Headlong is a man who has not been happy in matrimonial matters—I mean, has been exceptionally unhappy; this would

not concern us were it not that it has cost him a good deal of money. He has been endeavouring to recover moral tone lately by taking up vigorously with Temperance, and he has become rather a prominent orator on Total Abstinence platforms. He has lately edited a revised New Testament in which the miracle of Cana has been accommodated to Temperance views—the wine in his version is turned into water.'

'That is all.'

'Except those added in pencil. I do not like the looks of the board of directors. Tell me, Herring, have you any suspicion of trickery?'

Herring hesitated. He had, but he was without grounds to justify the open expression of his suspicion.

'By George!' exclaimed Captain Trecarrel, 'if I thought it were not on the square, I would break off my engagement. I inherit a respectable, I may say an honourable, name, and I do not choose that the name of Trecarrel should be trailed in the mire. The thing cannot last long without declaring its nature. If the gozzen that is crushed yields as much gold daily as I have seen extracted at one washing, then the dividends will begin to run. The working of

the mine does not entail a heavy outlay. There are not many men on it.'

'Very few indeed.'

'And the machinery is not enormously expensive, I suppose.'

'No.'

'Then, why the deuce did Tramplara make a company of the concern, and call for shares? If he had been sanguine, he might have worked it himself, and made his fortune in a twelvemonth.'

'Another thing that makes me suspicious,' said Herring, 'is that the lease is only for a year.'

'For a year!' exclaimed the Captain, and whistled. 'Then be sure Tramplara will blow Ophir up before the twelvemonth has elapsed. If he had been sure of gold, he would have taken a lease for ninety-nine years. I will have nothing to do with the family. I will put off the marriage. Listen to this, Herring. I carried off all the bits of stone I could from the auriferous vein of quartz, and I crushed them myself. I borrowed a hammer from a roadmaker, for which I paid him fourpence, and I pounded them, and then washed the crumbled mass in my basin, and not a trace of gold could I discover.'

'That proves nothing. You could hardly

expect to find the precious metal in a few nubbs you conveyed away in your coat pocket.'

'There ought to have been indications of gold. I should not have minded had I found as much as a pin's point. No! I believe Ophir to be a swindle, but how the swindling is done passes my comprehension.'

He sat looking into the fire, and kicking the logs with the toe of his boot. Then he threw himself back in his chair.

'I shall go to bed, Herring,' he said, 'and I shall stick there till there is a clearing in the air over Ophir. I am not going to be married whilst the cloud broods heavily. I shall go to bed.'

'Go to bed!' echoed Herring. 'It is early still.'

'I always go to bed when I want to get out of a difficulty. Old Tramplara is not far off, and he can come and see me. Young Sampson can come and see me also; but I defy both of them to get me out of my bed and into my breeches and blue coat against my pleasure. The marriage must be postponed.'

'Nonsense. You cannot do this.'

'I shall. I have got out of a score of difficulties by this means. There I stick till things have come round. My dear Herring,

there is no power in the world equal to *non possumus*.'

'But what of the lady's feelings?'

'Oh, blow the lady's feelings!' said Trecarrel, coarsely. 'Ladies' feelings are superficial; that is why they are so sensitive about dress. Men's feelings lie deep; they line their pockets. Orange is a good girl; but she won't feel, or, if she does, she will rather like it. Women like to have their feelings fretted, just as cats like having their backs scratched. Orange can come and see me in bed, and nurse me, if she chooses. Polly!' he called to the maid of the inn, 'get your best bedroom ready, and the sheets and blankets and featherbed well aired. I am going to retire for a week or ten days between the sheets.'

Herring burst out laughing.

'This is no laughing matter,' said Trecarrel, testily. 'I would not go to bed unless I could help it; but, upon my life, I do not see any other mode of escape. You will come and see me sometimes, old fellow, for time will drag.'

'Certainly I will; but what will you say to the Tramplaras?—to Miss Orange?'

'Say—say! why, that I am indisposed. That will be strictly within the bounds of truth, and what is consistent with a gentle-

man to say. Indisposed—the word was coined for my case. I'll send to Tramplara himself, and get it over as soon as I am in bed.'

'You are joking.'

'I am perfectly serious. I have cause to be so. I am, or was, not so very far from my marriage day, and I do not relish the prospect. Bring old Tramplara here. When he sees me embedded and indisposed to rise, he will grow uneasy and the money will be forthcoming. I have no doubt in the world that he is meditating a trick upon me. He is wonderfully clever; but he met his equal in the matter of the Patagonians—I'll tell you all about them some day. Herring, by some infernal blunder I was pricked as sheriff of the county one year. It was supposed that I was worth about five times my actual income. I could not endure the cost of office, and I did not want to pay the fine for refusal, so I went to bed, and wrote to the Lord Lieutenant from bed. I said that I was confined to my couch, and could not rise from it, which was true, strictly true, under the circumstances, and that I could not say that I would live through the year, which was also true, strictly true; and I got off without fine. On another occasion my creditors were un-

reasonable and urgent. I took to my bed again, and after I had laid there a fortnight, they mellowed; at the end of a month they were ripe for a composition of eight shillings in the pound. I find that, in difficulties, if I take at once to my bed I constitute myself master of the situation. It is the Hougoumont of all my Waterloos.'

Herring was still laughing.

'You may laugh,' pursued Trecarrel, 'but my plan is superlative. Judge of it by the faces of Tramplara and his son when they visit me. You know the look that comes over a chess-player, when his adversary says "checkmate." I suspect you will see some very similar expression steal over the countenances of Tramplara and young Hopeful. The old man will coax, and the young one bluster. They can do nothing. Here I lie, and they bite their nails and rack their brains. They are powerless. They cannot bring Orange and a parson here and have me married in bed. I should bury my head under the clothes. They would not attempt it. It would hardly be decent. I do not think it would be legal.'

'You will write, I suppose, to Miss Orange?'

'No; I shall send for her father. I do

not put hand to paper if I can help it. I never commit myself. *Litera scripta manet.* You have no idea, Herring, how successful my system is. Difficulties solve themselves; mountains melt into molehills ; tangles unravel of their own accord. The perfectness of the system consists in its extreme simplicity. Polly! run the warming-pan through the sheets before I retire. Whilst I am upstairs, Herring, there is a good fellow, keep a sharp look out on Ophir.'

CHAPTER XXV.

A LEVÉE.

In France it was anciently the custom for the Kings to hold *lits de justice*—that is to say they lay in bed, and whilst reposing on their pillows, and the vapours of sleep rose and rolled from their exalted brows, heard appeals and pronounced judgments. The royal example found hosts of imitators. No one ever dreams of following a good example, but one that is mischievous has eager copyists. It was so in France under the ancient *régime*. Nobles received their clients, ladies their suitors, in bed. Magistrates heard cases in the morning, before rising, whilst sipping their coffee. So far down had this habit descended, that Scarron, in his 'Roman Comique,' describes a respectable actress receiving an abbé, a magistrate, and various ladies and gentlemen in her bedroom, whilst she lay between the sheets. In the Parisian world, the world of salt and culture, the bedroom—the very bed itself—of a distinguished lady was the centre

round which the wit and gossip of the gay and literary world circled and sparkled.

The getting out of bed of a prince, and of those who imitated the prince, was as public as his lying in state. That was not the day of baths and Turkish towels, and therefore there was not the same reason against the admission of the public to a *levée* that would exist at present, at least in England.

Whilst the King drew on his stockings, he heard petitions ; as he encased himself in his black satin breeches, he determined suits. When his shirt-frills were being drawn out, he dictated despatches ; whilst his wig was being dusted, he granted concessions ; and as he washed his fingers and face in a saucer, he conferred bishoprics and abbacies.

In like manner, the toilettes of ladies of rank and the queens of beauty and fashion were times for the reception of their favoured friends. Hogarth's picture of the toilette of the lady in the *Mariage à la mode* shows that this custom had extended to England. A *levée* was then, as the name implies, an assembly held during the process of getting out of bed.

Captain Trecarrel was not consciously copying the ancient *régime*. He lay in bed because it suited his convenience. He received

visitors there because he did not choose to receive them elsewhere, till he had carried a point on which his heart was set.

'Why, bless my soul, Trecarrel! what ails you? Laid up in this wretched inn—caught cold on your way down? I hope nothing serious; not rheumatic fever, eh?'

'Severe indisposition,' said Trecarrel, looking at Mr. Trampleasure calmly out of his celestial blue eyes, innocent as those of a child, little spots of sky, pure and guileless.

'Good gracious!' blustered Tramplara, 'not anything gastric, is it? No congestion of any of the organs?'

'There is tightness in the chest,' said the Captain; 'that is normal.'

'Bless my soul! couldn't you push on to Launceston? Were you so bad that you broke down here?

> When a man's a little bit poorly,
> Makes a fuss, wants a nurse,
> Thinks he's going to die most surely,
> Sends for the doctor who makes him worse.

You know the lines, but whether by the Bard of Avon, or by Chalker in his "Canterbury Tales," I cannot recall. Poor Orange! What a state of mind she will be in!'

'I dare say,' said the Captain, composedly.

'The child will be half mad with alarm.

What does the doctor say? What has he given you? Something stinging or routing, eh?'

'I have not sent for him.'

'Not sent for the doctor? By Grogs! and you seriously ill. How do you know but that it may interfere with your marriage on the eighth?'

'That is what I have been supposing.'

'You must get well, my dear boy. You positively must.'

'I hope so, but that does not altogether depend on me.'

'I insist on a doctor being sent for.'

'His coming will be of no use. I know my own constitution.'

'Have you sent word to Orange?'

'No, I left that for you. You see I am in bed, and I cannot write. I don't think the people of the inn would permit it, lest I should ink the sheets. Salts of lemon are not always satisfactory in removing stains.'

'Orange will be heartbroken.'

'The recuperative power of the female heart cannot be overestimated.'

'Mrs. Trampleasure will be in such distress, she will do nothing but cry——'

'And sniff. I say, father-in-law that want to be, how goes Ophir?'

'Oh, my dear boy! magnificently.'

'Like the Laira at Plymouth ?—eh, father-in-law elect? '

'What do you mean? '

'The rendezvous of all the gulls in the Western counties. Only, with this difference, the gulls go to the Laira for what they can get, and they come to Ophir for what they can give.'

'I do not like these flippant jokes,' said Tramplara, puffing and waxing red.

'The joke is too near the truth. You see, father-in-law prospective, I have been in Exeter, and have talked Ophir over with lawyers, bankers, mining agents, and men of the world.'

'Well? '

'And I find that the general verdict on Ophir is, that it is a —— swindle.'

Tramplara stamped, turned purple in face, and strode up and down the room.

'You insult me. Look at my white hairs. This is an outrage on my character, on my age. Do you dare to say that an old man like me, with one foot in eternity, would—would——'

'Reserve that for the Flamanks,' said the Captain; 'it is an argument without weight with me.'

'This is intolerable. You wish to break off connection with me.'

'Not at all,' said the Captain, smiling and twisting his fair moustache. 'I am only telling you what is said in Exeter about Ophir. My own opinion is inchoate. Sometimes I am inclined to believe in the genuineness of the article, but generally, I admit, what I admire most is not its genuineness, but the skill with which a spurious article is disposed of.'

'You have seen the gold?'

'But I have not found it.'

'You have dug out the quartz yourself and followed the entire process, to the last washing and sifting. Will not that content you?'

'I brought home with me some of the auriferous stone, and crushed it myself, and washed it myself, but not a particle of gold was there.'

'Simply because you took pieces in which there was no gold. Gold is not so common as hornblend.'

'Nor, apparently, as discernible in the stone. Look here, father-in-law that want to be.'

'I won't be spoken to in this style.'

'You want me to marry Orange, do you not?'

'I do not care a penny about you. All I care for is poor Orange, and her feelings.'

'You are ready to pay me five thousand pounds for taking Orange off your hands, are you not?' asked the imperturbable Captain.

'I am ready to pay you five thousand pounds as her jointure, because she is my daughter, whom I dearly love, and I wish to provide for her comfort and happiness in the future when I am dead and forgotten.'

'And you were thinking only of her comfort and happiness when you offered us those Patagonian bonds,' said Trecarrel. 'Fortunately, I was equally interested in the dear creature's comfort and happiness, and in her interest I declined them.'

'Have done with those Patagonian bonds,' said Tramplara, impatiently. 'You will bring my white hairs with exasperation to the grave. I shall go down stairs, and leave you to soak in bed. Do you intend to lie here for a twelvemonth? I do not believe you are seriously ill.'

'Seriously indisposed is what I said,' answered the Captain.

'You have done this sort of thing before,'

said old Tramplara, very hot and angry; 'I have heard of you. Ridiculous! not like a man.'

Trecarrel was wholly unmoved. He turned round in his bed with his face to the wall. The old man stamped about the room, swearing and uttering his opinions freely, without eliciting a word from the Captain. After a while he cooled down, finding that his wrath and remonstrances were ineffectual, and he seated himself on a chair by the bedside.

'Be reasonable, Captain,' he said. 'What is the drift of this farce?'

Trecarrel turned round in bed, and faced him with perfect equanimity in his handsome features.

'I say, Trampleasure, the second Solomon who draws gold out of Ophir, I give it up. How do you manage it?'

The fiery flush again came into the old man's face.

'There, there, I do not want to anger you,' said Trecarrel. 'I have a proposal to make to you, father-in-law *in nubibus*! Let me go with you into the mine. You shall indicate to me the auriferous vein, and I will pick out pieces and submit them to you. Those about which you are doubtful shall be

cast aside ; those you approve I will retain. I will pound them myself, and wash them myself.'

'Where—in our works?'

'By no means. Anywhere that suits my convenience and pleasure. At John Herring's lead mine, if I choose. Then, if I find gold, you shall have my name on your list of directors, and I will go heartily with you in the concern.'

'I do not care to have you as a director.'

'That is not true. You have several times urged me to be one. You want some respectable names on your list, which is sadly deficient in them. Will you oblige me with some particulars about Arundell Golitho, Esq. of Trevorgan? By some strange omission he has not been made a Justice of the Peace and a Deputy Lieutenant of the county of Cornwall.'

'I will answer no questions. You want to force a quarrel on me.'

'On the contrary, I want to dispel my doubts. I am, what I think you call in your chapel, an earnest inquirer. I can tell you one thing for certain, father-in-law that may, might, would, could, and should be, I am not going to be married to your Orange without the fulfilment of one of two conditions.'

'What are they?' asked Tramplara, sulkily.

'One is, that I may make the proposed investigation into the qualities of Ophir.'

'I refuse it,' said Trampleasure, hastily.

'You refuse to allow me fairly to test its value as a mine?'

'I do not say that. I refuse the proposed test, because it is unfair and insulting. You may come and extract as much quartz as you like from the rock, and crush and wash it on my floors, but you shall not carry it elsewhere.'

'What is your objection?'

'I say the proposal is insulting. Look at my white hairs. Do you suppose——'

'Leave the white hairs out of the matter. What is unfair in my proposal?'

'I will not consent. I will die before I permit it.'

The old man sprang from his seat. 'Good heavens! I shall have every visitor and applicant for shares pestering me to carry off specimens.'

'Why should they not?'

'Because it is against regulations. I have laid down a strict rule, to be relaxed to none, that every specimen raised is to be tested on

the spot, and not elsewhere. I will have the trial take place where I can see that it is fairly conducted. How do I know but that behind my back the trial may be incorrectly, imperfectly, or dishonestly carried on?'

'I do not ask to do anything behind your back. You shall select half a dozen specimens. We will bring them here. I will smash them up in the backyard with a paviour's hammer under your eye, and I will wash them in the water-trough there, with you looking on. Will that suffice?'

'What is your other alternative?' asked Trampleasure, sullenly.

'My second proposal is this. You have promised me five thousand pounds along with Orange.'

'I know I have, and I shall be ready to pay it when you are married.'

'My good father-in-law prospective, that does not quite satisfy me. Of course I do not question your honour and your intention to discharge what you propose. But speculation, above all, speculation in mines, superlatively such a speculation as Ophir, is risky. I do not wish to risk my chance of getting that five thousand pounds (and connubial felicity) on the continuance of the Ophirian gold yield.'

'You don't suppose I will pay you down the money now, before you are married.'

'No, I do not, and I do not want to run the chance of getting married, only to discover that the five thousand pounds has been sunk in Ophir, and is only available in the shape of paper on Ophir, or only to discover that Ophir has collapsed like a pricked bladder the day before.'

'What, then, do you want?' asked Trampleasure, very angrily, rubbing his knuckles with the palm of his hand in his irritation and impatience.

'What I want is, that you should lodge the money now in the hands of a third party, say of Mr. John Herring. If I fail to fulfil my part of the contract within a given time, say on the day already fixed for the wedding, or seven days after, I forfeit it and it returns to you. When I am married to Orange, then Herring is empowered to hand the money over to me.'

'Upon my word, Captain Trecarrel, of all audacious and exacting men I ever came across, you are the most audacious and exacting. And what if I refuse this condition also?'

'Then I remain in bed.'

'What is the advantage of that?'

'I am engaged to be married on the

eighth. If I am ill, my illness serves as an excuse for my absence from the hymeneal altar when expected there. The world can say nothing against that; and I am bound to maintain my character as a *chevalier sans reproche.*'

'Pray how long will this farce continue?'

'What farce?'

'Your lying in bed.'

'You will find a looking-glass yonder, father-in-law anticipative. Examine your countenance in it, and see if the expression is that of a spectator at a farce. It looks deuced more like that of a witness at a melodrama.'

'How long do you soak here?' exclaimed Trampleasure, sulkily.

'I shall await events from this commanding position. Ophir will blow up before long. It cannot continue, and will send you and yours head over heels into space, and where you will drop, heaven only knows. Then, of course, I shall be free.'

Trampleasure paced the room, his face blazing. He was very angry, he was also greatly perplexed. He was particularly anxious to get Orange married to the Captain. Presently he turned round, and said in a sullen tone, and with an angry lower on his brows, 'I will give you an answer shortly.'

'All right, I am in no hurry. The bed is not uncomfortable. Herring is coming here this evening to smoke a pipe with me, and I will ask him to hold the stakes.'

The next visitor was young Sampson. He came in fuming, and asked the Captain his intentions. He was Orange's brother. It was his duty to see that she was treated fairly, and, by God, he would do his duty. He was not going to let a militia captain play fast and loose with the poor girl's affections, and possibly blight her entire future by his heartless desertion. Trecarrel listened to him with the utmost coolness. He had expected this visit, and knew what its character would be.

'Sampson the little and weak,' he said, 'your father has sent you here to try what bluster will effect. May I trouble you to convey to him a message from me, and say that the effects are nil?'

'Are you going to desert Orange? If you are, I'll shoot you.'

'No, you won't,' said the Captain. 'In the first place, I am not going to desert Orange; and in the second place, if I were, the utmost you would do would be to try to get money compensation out of me, and that would be like squeezing a stone for milk. In one particular I am like Ophir. If you want to

extract gold out of me, you must first put it into me.'

Sampson's face became mottled, and his eyes, with a startled expression in them, turned to the Captain, but, seeing his eyes fixed inquiringly on him, his fell. Trecarrel chuckled, and drew the sheets over his head. Presently he looked out again. Sampson was at the window killing flies. He had his back turned to the bed, and was stabbing at the flies with the pin of his stock.

'I have placed two alternatives before your father,' said the Captain: 'I will marry Orange to-morrow if he will comply with either. Either let him give me a fair chance of testing the ore of Ophir, and satisfy myself that the mine is genuine, or let him pay five thousand pounds into the hands of a third party, to be held till the marriage is concluded.'

'I refuse—I refuse each alternative, in his name and my own,' said young Sampson, stabbing at a fly with such fury that he broke a pane in the window.

'There goes eighteen pence,' said the Captain, 'beside letting a current of cold air in on me. Leave the room. I need repose. My indisposition gains upon me.'

The next to visit Captain Trecarrel was

John Herring. Herring was not very willing to undertake the obligation the Captain was desirous of forcing upon him: however, he was good-natured, that is, easily imposed on, and in the end he consented to act as the third party, and receive the money into his keeping till the marriage took place.

On the morrow old Tramplara came back; he remained some time, and attempted to coax Trecarrel into good humour and the surrender of his ultimatum. Trecarrel especially urged the former of his alternatives, as he perceived that it was eminently distasteful to both the old man and his son. Tramplara went away, refusing both alternatives.

On the third day Tramplara did not come at all, but Trecarrel heard through the hostess that young Sampson had been there to inquire whether he was still confined to his bed.

On the fourth day the old man came, very sulky and rude, and gave way—not to the first alternative, but to the second. Herring was sent for, and the transaction was arranged to the satisfaction of the Captain.

'Now then,' said Trecarrel, 'my indisposition is better. Ring for shaving water. Clear every one out of the room. I am going to rise.'

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE SHEKEL.

'Miss Cicely,' said John Herring.

'Yes, Mr. John,' answered Cicely, with a smile.

'Well—Cicely—if you wish it.'

'I do wish it; I dislike formality. You have stayed with us so long, and have been so good to us, and helped us so greatly, that I suspect a cousinship between us, if the respective Battishill and Herring pedigrees were worked. The West of England families are all united by marriage.'

'My family boasts of no dignity or antiquity,' said Herring. 'We have been humble yeomen down to my father, and never dreamed of calling ourselves gentlemen, certainly not of tacking an esquire after our names.'

'If your ancestors were humble yeomen, ours were very humble gentlemen. Do look

at West Wyke. Did you ever see a gentlemen's house elsewhere so small, and yet so full of self-consciousness? An embattled gateway in a wall that a boy could overleap, guarding a garden of hollyhocks. A front door with a huge beam to close it, running back into the wall, to protect the family plate, which consists of one silver caudle cup, and a whalebone-handled punch-ladle with a Queen Anne's shilling in the bowl. I believe our family stood barely above highwater mark, the line where the yeoman ended and the gentleman began; but so barely above it, that we were always liable to be submerged, and never able to lift ourselves wholly into a more exalted and secure position.'

'I dare say,' observed John Herring, 'that the smallness of your house has been the salvation of your family. You have not been expected to keep a large establishment; to entertain much, and to have a stable and furniture and a cellar.'

'I dare say you are right. By the way, how is the sick gentleman at the Oxenham Arms?'

'There is not much change in his condition. He is still indisposed.'

'Who is he?'

'A Cornish squire, Trecarrel by name,

who is engaged to the daughter of Mr. Trampleasure.'

'No doubt Miss Mirelle will have had some of her airs taken out of her in the Trampleasure household.'

This was the first time that Cicely had voluntarily, and of her own prompting, spoken of Mirelle. Herring had mentioned her occasionally, but Cicely showed plainly that she retained no pleasant recollection of the Countess, and was uninterested in what had become of her. There was a spice of vindictiveness in her tone as she spoke. She was rejoicing that Mirelle should have her airs taken out of her.

'The poor Countess,' said Herring, 'has suffered much annoyance among those wretched people——'

'I have no patience with her,' interrupted Cicely, 'giving herself airs, and calling herself a Countess. Why, her father was only a merchant, and I cannot see how she can inherit her mother's title. The wife of an Earl is a Countess, and the daughters are Ladies, not Countesses.'

'It is different abroad.'

'You ought not to have humoured her. However, as you see no more of her now, no harm has been done by your falling in with

her fancy. The Tramplaras are the last persons in the world to feed her vanity, and so by this time, it is to be hoped, she has learned to stand on the same level as those she is called to associate with.'

'Do you not think it must be intolerable for one so refined and sensitive?'

'Oh, there, there!' interrupted Cicely, again laughing. 'We have had enough of Mirelle; let us banish her from our conversation. The very thought of her gives me a shiver.'

'Cicely, tell me, has old Tramplara been pretty frequently to West Wyke of late?'

'He has been to see my father now and then.'

'Do you know that he has put down your father on his list as one of the directors of Ophir? His name is not yet printed, but Tramplara is counting on him.'

'Why should he require my father's name?'

'To give respectability to the concern.'

'I hope my father will not consent.'

'He *must* not. I am persuaded that Ophir is a fraud, and your father must be saved from being involved in what will cover with disgrace, and involve in ruin, all who are connected with it.'

'Good heavens! Do you think my father has already given his consent? Oh, please go in and see him, and stop him. I know he is becoming excited about Ophir. He laughed at it at first, but he has changed his tone of late.'

'I will go at once.'

Herring stepped into the hall to Mr. Battishill.

'Well, Herring!' exclaimed the old man, brightening up; 'back from Zeal! How goes the sick man—Captain Trecarrel? Dear me! he represents a fine old family, de Esse, alias Trecarrel, argent two chevronels sable, with a mullet for a difference. A Devonshire family—the Esse of Ashe, and the elder branch, died out in an heiress who carried Ashe to the Drakes; but the second son, a long way back, married the heiress of Trecarrel, and dropped the patronymic for the place name. How is the last limb of a splendid tree?'

'There is nothing more serious the matter with him than that he is going to marry the daughter of old Tramplara.'

'Good Lord! what a mésalliance! The Trampleasures are mushrooms—I had almost said toadstools. I suppose it is a case of money; the needy gentleman with centuries

behind him takes the daughter of the wealthy founder of Ophir for the sake of the mountain of gold she brings. How is it that Tramplesure has not secured Trecarrel as a director? His name would carry weight.'

'Exactly,' answered Herring; 'that is what Tramplara wants—he has not got a name of importance on his list. Do you know anything of Arundell Golitho, Esq. of Trevorgan?'

'Never heard his name before.'

'Nor have I, nor has any one else.'

'He must be some one of importance, or Tramplara would not have put him on the board?'

'I do not believe in his existence. You were asking why Captain Trecarrel has not become a director. For the best of reasons. He does not care to cover an honourable name with disgrace.'

Mr. Battishill's face changed colour.

'That is a strong expression, Herring, and ought to be justified.'

'Dear Mr. Battishill, you know what Polpluggan did for you.'

'Polpluggan was a disastrous venture, certainly.'

'You told me yourself it was a swindle.'

'Well, well, the word was too strong. I

thought so at the time ; but Tramplara has been frank with me about it. Since he has been here so much, engaged on Ophir, I have seen his books ; he showed them me in the most open manner possible, he insists on my going over them myself. Polpluggan was a failure, not a swindle. I withdraw the expression.'

'And Ophir, I believe, is nothing less than a swindle, and will cover every one who has to do with it with infamy. That is why Captain Trecarrel will not lend his name to the concern.'

'Why then does he marry the daughter of Ophir?'

'That is another affair. He has been engaged to her for some time, and cannot with honour break away.'

'What leads him to suppose that Ophir is a—a——'

'A swindle! Because he has been in Exeter consulting those who are likely to know ; because he knows the antecedents of the man who has started it. I trust, sir, you have not given Tramplara grounds to hope that you will become a director?'

'Well, he has been pressing, very pressing, I may say, and I have not positively said I will not. You see, my dear Herring,

the mine is sure to be a success. The applications for shares increase instead of falling off; that is a pretty good proof of public confidence.'

'That proves nothing, except that there are many fools in the world ready to part with their money.'

'They would hardly take shares unless they had convinced themselves that the speculation was sound. Nothing, I understand, can be more above board than the proceedings of Mr. Trampleasure. The gold ore is crushed and washed before the eyes of the public. I cannot see where the fraud can be.'

'There is roguery somewhere, I am convinced.'

'My dear Herring, that is your opinion. Others equally capable of forming opinions think differently. The mine is on my property, it is only reasonable that I should be a director and benefit by it. As Mr. Trampleasure put it to me—the world asks, Why is not the lord of the manor on the board of directors? The absence of his name from it damages the prospects of the mine. Other men of position and property hold back because I do not sanction the venture. It is necessary that I should lend my name.'

'You must on no account lend your name, sir,' said Herring, earnestly.

'You are very peremptory, Mr. Herring,' said the old man, nettled. 'The lead mine halts; nothing is being done there, no lead turned out, no machinery set up, no company got together to work it. And hard by is the auriferous quartz vein of Ophir——'

'Excuse my interrupting you,' said Herring, 'but may I know whether you believe in Upaver having ever been Ophir?'

'That is a matter into which I do not enter. I put all these antiquarian theories aside. I look at the plain facts. Is gold found there, or is it not?'

'Gold is certainly washed there. How it comes there I do not pretend to say.'

'You mean to insinuate that it is not dug out of the mine.'

'I doubt it, because I mistrust old Tramplara, and I think the way in which the affair has been got up is suspicious. Did you ever hear the old people call Upaver Ophir?'

'No, but there is a similarity in the names. However, as I told you, I put all these antiquarian conceits on one side.'

'Mr. Battishill, we must consider them as an integral part of the swindle, if swindle it be. You do not, I presume, believe in the

Jews and Phœnicians having worked this mine in remote ages?'

'I tell you I do not think of this at all; I am not qualified to enter into and examine this question. But when it comes to gravel containing gold dust, why, bless my soul! my eyes are the best judges. As for the Jews and Phœnicians, there is, at all events, this to be said for the theory of their having been here, that they dropped a shekel—a silver shekel—I saw it with my own eyes. I have an impression of it in my desk. Thus where a Jewish coin has been found, there in all probability a Jew has been to drop it.'

'Who found the coin?'

'The Reverend Israel Flamank bought it of Grizzly Cobbledick, who had picked it up in his garden, or somewhere near the Giant's Table.'

'I beg you, sir, I entreat you, as you love your home and respect the name you bear, not to have anything to do with Ophir till I have followed this shekel up to its origin. It may serve as a clue by which the mystery will be unravelled. I will go and see Grizzly himself, and ascertain from his own lips where he found it, or rather, whether he found it at all.'

'You are a sceptic,' said Mr. Battishill, 'steeped in the spirit of the age.'

'Well,' asked Cicely, when Herring came out, 'what is the result?' She noticed that he was looking excited.

'Your father is bitten with Ophir,' he answered. 'He and I have nearly come to hard words. It is the first time we have had any difference, and we have been warm on both sides. I must find out about Ophir, if only to save him; for Tramplara has woven his web round him, and has so dusted his eyes with gold that he can neither free himself nor see clearly where he is. He will infallibly be brought to ruin again by that wretched old man, unless I get to the bottom of the mystery of this accursed Ophir.'

'Oh, Mr. Herring!' pleaded Cicely, putting her hands together; 'do—do help us.'

'Yes, *Miss* Cicely.'

'I beg your pardon,' she said, and the clouds cleared from her pleasant face. 'Cousin John, what should we—what should I do without you?'

'I have done nothing as yet. But I am determined to expose Ophir, and by so doing to save your father.'

'How will you set about it?'

'I have a clue—a shekel.'

John Herring went in search of Grizzly. The old savage was now generally to be found near Ophir. The mine exercised a strange attraction on the wild old man. The visitors spoke to him, and asked him questions about the Giant's Table, and the Jews, and the gold, and then made him presents. Some of the more intemperate among the Temperates had serious thought of setting him up as a representative of Jonadab the son of Rechab, and put leading questions to him, to elicit from him traditions of such descent. But further inquiries into the habits and peculiarities of his parent stock at Nymet damped their enthusiasm. The Nymet savages, even if temperate, which was doubtful, were not shining moral lights to hold up as examples in other particulars. Grizzly had become somewhat civilised by association with human beings. When he was tired of being questioned, he rambled off upon the moors, and disappeared up the stream in the direction of Rayborough Pool, but not for long. The stir of Ophir drew him back. He liked watching the stampers, and to stand on the bank above the washing floors, chuckling and sniggering at the people examining the sediment and picking out the glittering grains.

There Herring found him. He at once attacked him on the subject of the shekel.

'I found 'n in the airth just below the great stone to the head o' the Giant's Table. I found 'n about six foot vour inches below the surfass o' the ground. There was dree or vour more, all alike, but Loramussy! I didn't give mun (them) no heed. I thought they warn't worth nothing, and I gived mun to my little maid to play wi'. But her, I reckon, ha' lost the lot, all but thicky as I sold to the Reverend Israelite Flamank, and he sed it were an Israelitish shekel. I've a-heard the old volks used to call the Giant's Table a Gilgal, but they don't do that no more; and I can mind how this were always called Hophir, but the folks as is skollards took to naming 'n Upaver, and that be all I've a got to say. I can't say nothing about Jonadab the son o' Rechab, as were my great-granfer, cos a died when I was a baby. I'll thankee to remember a poor man as is nigh vourscore years old, and 'ud die afore he'd let a drop o' other liker down his throat but pure water, glory rallaluley, harmen.' And he held out his hand. 'Oh! I beg pardon; didn't think 'twere the young Squire. No offence.'

'Cobbledick,' said Herring, 'have you

ever found any more silver shekels about the Table ?'

'No, never ; only once for all.'

'How deep down did you say they were?'

'What did I say? I found 'n in the airth just below the big stone to the head o' the Giant's Table. I found 'n about six foot vour inches below the surfass o' the ground.'

'I have heard that already, word for word. Can you give me any idea of the depth, not in words, but by showing me about the depth that you call six foot four inches ?'

Cobbledick looked blankly at him.

'What do you take your own height to be ?'

Grizzly was posed.

'I suppose it took a deal of sinking to reach the depth where—you found the shekels ?'

'Loramussy, maister!' exclaimed the old wretch, 'weeks and weeks ; that shaft yonder were nothing to it.'

'That will do, Grizzly.'

Herring was convinced that the old man was repeating by rote a lesson that had been taught him. However much he was questioned and cross-questioned he returned to the same story, in the same words. Herring gave up

the hope of getting anything more in this quarter. Cobbledick had degenerated into a beggar—a wretched, canting beggar, accommodating his whine to the craze of the persons who visited Ophir.

But Herring was not going to abandon the clue of the shekel because he could find out nothing from Grizzly. He went to the Giant's Table to catechise Joyce, but she was not there.

Joyce was now nearly well. The splints had been taken off her arms, and she could use her hands, and do light work; but the hands were stiff, and long inaction had weakened her arms.

Herring could not spare the time to wait for her return; he did not know where she was, and he was due at the Oxenham Arms for the final settlement of the arrangement between Trecarrel and Trampleasure, in which he was a party.

On the morrow, Captain Trecarrel left. In the evening Herring went in quest of Joyce and found her hoeing in the little field. He called, and she ran to him as a dog to its master, and with as marked demonstrations of delight at seeing him.

'Joyce, I came here yesterday to find you, and you were away.'

'Oh dear, oh dear, though!' she exclaimed; 'I were wiring a rabbit.'

'Joyce, I want a word with you.'

'You can have scores; as many as you wants.'

'I know. A woman is free of her words. You must tell me the truth now, my little maid, for a good deal depends on it.'

'Did I ever tell'y a lie, now?' asked Joyce, offended. 'You may cut me in pieces afore I'll say other than what be true to you.'

'What I want to know, Joyce, is, where did your father get that shekel?'

'I don't know what that be.'

'A silver coin. He says he found three or four here under one of the stones of the Table. There is a branch on one side, and on the other a cup with a flame rising out of it.'

'I never seed nothing of the sort, nowhere.'

'Your father says that he gave them to you, and that you lost all, except one which he retained and sold to Mr. Flamank.'

Joyce shook her head.

'You have never seen anything of the kind?'

'It be just one o' vaither's pack o' lies,' answered the candid Joyce; 'vaither hev

been lying finely since Ophir began. He never showed me nothing like that; he never gived me no silver money. He never had none to give till Ophir began.'

'You are very positive.'

'If you doubt, I'll say, Blast me blue——'

'That will do,' interrupted Herring; 'your word will suffice without the blue blazes to colour it.'

The old man had lied about the shekel. He had not given it to the girl, he had therefore probably not found it at all, but it had been given him by those who had put the story into his mouth.

'I'll ax vaither if you likes,' said Joyce; 'he'll tell me, all right.'

'I do not think he will. That is all I wanted to know, my dear girl.'

'I say,' said Joyce, 'doant'y go off now right on end. Sit you down a mite here in the sun and have a chat. I never see nothing of you now, not as it used to be when I were ill and scatt to bits. I a'most wish my airms was broke again, that you could come and see me ivery day. That were beautiful.'

'Very well, Joyce, by all means. I have nothing particular to do, so I am quite at your service.' He sat down by the girl under the lee of the great stones. It was

warm there and pleasant, leaning against the grey blocks of hoar antiquity and unknown use, stained orange and silvery white with lichen, and with white frosty moss like antlers of elfin deer filling the nooks in the stones. The ants were crawling over the moss in the sun; they were migrating and wore their wings for that one day. Turf was heaped up at the side of the cromlech, forming a rude bench. On this the two sat. As he took his place the thought came into Herring's head that far away in the dim prehistoric age, some such a savage as that which sat beside him had assisted when it was reared.

'It be lew (sheltered) here,' said Joyce; 'vaither hev took to sitting here mostly on a Sunday when he ain't wanted to the mine.'

'He leaves you very much alone now.'

'That he does. Vaither be much changed o' late. The vokes there ha' taught 'n to smoke, and they give 'n a bit o' backie now and then, and when he haven't got no backie, then he flips off this here moss, this black sort o' trade on the moorstones, and he smokes that.'

'A new sort of life for him,' said Herring.

'It amuses he,' answered the girl. 'He says he didn't know as Gorolmity had so many vules in the world. He says they be as plenty as stones on Dartmoor.'

'I dare say they are, and certainly those are fools who congregate about Ophir.'

'Vaither likes to hear mun talk, and go sifting and cradling and washing for the gold. It makes 'n laugh, it do.'

'Why, Joyce?'

'Why, because there bain't none of 'em knows where the gold comes from, and there bain't one of 'em as don't think himself as wise as Cosdon is big.'

'Where does the gold come from?' asked Herring, eagerly, so eagerly that Joyce turned sharply round and looked him hard in the face.

'Don't'y know neither?'

'Indeed I do not.'

'Vaither said as you didn't and nobody didn't. And larned and skolards as the volk be, vaither be too much for mun.'

'Joyce, if you can tell me where the gold comes from I shall indeed be thankful.'

'Do you wish very much to know?'

Joyce was silent. She looked straight before her. Something was working in her mind.

'Well, Joyce?' asked Herring; he laid his hand on hers. 'If you will tell me this, you will repay me for all the little trouble I

took to make your poor hands sound and strong again.'

'Then I'll tell you, come what may. It is just this that made me doubt to say. Vaither 'd kill me sure as vuzz blooms all the year, if he knowed as I had told you. Look here,' said Joyce; 'do'y see thicky ant there. Well, he took up a great moorstone, and sez he, "You, Joyce, be that ant, and I'll treat you the same," and down with the stone.'

'Yes,' said Herring, his blood curdling, 'I understand you.'

'And after that he sed, Glory rallaluley.'

'Joyce, your father shall never know that you told me.'

'Whether he knows or not I'll tell, because you wish it. If he does kill me, it don't matter much.' Then she looked him steadily in the eyes, and said: 'This be the way in which it be done. Vaither puts the gold dust in. When the bell rings, that's the signal for he to be ready up at the head o' the launder' (wooden channel) 'where the water runs along to go to the washing pans, and he just slips in some of the gold into the water. So the stream carries it down into the washing places where the pounded stone is ready to be washed.'

Herring almost laughed. The solution of the puzzle was simplicity itself—so simple

that it had escaped every one. Every eye had watched the stone, no one had thought that the water might be salted.

'I'll show you some of it,' said Joyce. 'There is a little bag hid away under the table. You understand vaither don't put none in when there be no vules to find it. Old Tramplara pulls a cord, and that lets the water on; and when the water is let on, vaither sprinkles the gold in it. He don't do it when there be no vules there, for Tramplara sez he ha'n't got much of the gold to waste. Then, after it has been washed and sorted out, he gives it back to vaither, and in it goes again for more vules to find. I've done it once or twice myself for vaither, when he couldn't go hisself. That be how I came to know about it.'

'I am lastingly indebted to you, Joyce, for telling me this.'

'You won't bring vaither to no harm because of this, will'y now? That 'ud be too cruel onkind o' you. But no—you'll never do no hurt to me nor vaither, I be sure.'

'Indeed I will not, dear Joyce. I shall never forget what I owe to you for having told me this; and I promise you your father shall not suffer for it.'

CHAPTER XXVII.

COBBLEDICK'S RHEUMATICS.

John Herring did not go at once to Mr. Battishill with the account of what he had heard. He waited till he had himself witnessed the transaction. Some time before the public were admitted to the mine, he went in that direction, making however a wide circuit, and secreted himself behind some of the rocks that commanded the head of the 'launder.' There he remained till Old Grizzly arrived, and, after having looked about him, lay down beside the stream close to the sluice that let the water into the wooden conduit for the washing floors.

Herring saw him strew the dust in the stream as it was admitted; he remained at his post of observation till some time after Cobbledick had departed, and then he went direct to West Wyke.

He told Mr. Battishill what he had learned from Joyce, and how he had verified the

account with his own eyes. It was true he had not arrested Grizzly's hand and taken the gold dust out of it; but he had seen some of the gold supplied to the old man by Tramplara, and which he kept secreted under the Giant's Table, and there was no moral doubt that what the old man had strewn in the water was that gold powder which Tramplara intended should be found in the pans.

The revelation of the fraud made Mr. Battishill excited and angry.

'What,' he exclaimed, helpless in his agitation—'what is to be done? Good heavens! what can be done?'

'That is what I have been considering. You are a justice of the peace, and you must sign a warrant for the arrest of Mr. Tramplara and his son. There can be no question that young Sampson is involved in the swindle equally with his father, who is the originator and mainspring of the whole concern.'

'I have not acted for many years. I had rather not.'

'But, sir, I think it most important that you should take this matter up. Remember, this fraud has been carried out on your property, under a lease granted by you, and that you come out of it without the loss of a penny. I think it possible—I only say

possible—that some inconsiderate persons may cast reflections on you. Fortunately, your name is not on the list of directors, so that you will not be involved in the ruin this discovery will bring on many; but your abstention from becoming one may be commented on unfavourably, unless you cut the occasion away. If you issue a warrant for the apprehension of the wretched swindlers, and become the main instrument of the break-up of the company and the exposure of the dishonest trick that has been played, no one can wag his tongue against you.'

'You are right,' said the old man. He held out his hand to Herring, and the tears came into his eyes. 'John, I cannot thank you sufficiently for having protected me against myself. I confess to you that old Tramplara had talked my suspicions down, and had raised in my breast the demon of cupidity. No, I will not say cupidity, but speculation. I do not care for money in itself, but I do delight in making it, or, what is the same thing, in scheming how to make it. I suspect I have been too overweening in my esteem of my own powers, and now you have given that conceit a fatal fall. Do you remember the wrestle in "As You Like it?" "Sir," I say with Rosalind, "you have

wrestled well, and overthrown more than" Tramplara. I trust my self-esteem is dead as Charles. I shall never again venture to have an opinion contrary to yours.'

'But, Mr. Battishill, is not this a little wandering from the point? I want a warrant for the apprehension of father and son.'

'It is no wandering at all. I am explaining to you the reason of my submission. I tell you that you have but to propose a measure, and I carry it out as best I may. Go to Okehampton, and get a clerk to make out a warrant, and I will sign it.'

'One thing more. I do not wish old Cobbledick to be arrested. He is too stupid and too ignorant to know what he has been doing, and it must be managed that he is allowed to escape. I have passed my word to Joyce that he shall not be brought into trouble. Poor Joyce is in terror of her life of him, and if he were to suspect that she had betrayed the secret it would go hard with her.'

'Oh no,' said Mr. Battishill, hastily; 'Cobbledick is my tenant, that is, a squatter on my land, and I must protect him if I can.'

'It can be managed,' said Herring. 'I

will go to him, and tell him plainly what I saw to-day, and threaten that I will have him apprehended, unless he absents himself to-morrow, and gets the Tramplaras to appoint a substitute. After that I will communicate with the constable, and we shall succeed in arresting gold-handed the fellow who salts the water.'

'Poor Cobbledick! I should be very sorry for trouble to come on him. He is a beast, not a man, and these Tramplaras have put him in shafts and driven him where they chose to go.'

'One thing more,' pursued Herring 'Directly we have caught the man in the act, I must ride to Launceston at full speed. Old Tramplara is not here. He has gone home because his daughter is about to be married; by the way, the marriage is to take place this week, I believe. If the news were to reach him before he is arrested, he would draw every penny of the shareholders' money from the bank, and make a bolt with it. Before we knew whether he were gone to Plymouth or Falmouth, he would be on the high seas, and those who have invested in Ophir would lose everything.'

'You are right, John, right again. You take every one's interests under your pro-

tection. I suspect there will be wailing and wringing of hands when this scandal breaks on the religio-speculative world.'

Herring did not see Cobbledick till next morning. After the interview with Mr. Battishill, he rode into Okehampton and obtained the warrant. He did not wish to speak to Grizzly long before he dealt the stroke, lest he should give the alarm. When he did speak, he was straightforward with him.

'Cobbledick,' he said, 'I have long entertained suspicions of Ophir. I knew it was a swindle, but how the swindling was managed I did not know till yesterday. I had gone through every process of the mine attentively, except one, and I was satisfied that the trickery was not committed under my eyes in the mine itself. There was only one process I had not studied, and that was one which took place above the workings. I allude to the letting on of the water that washes the gozzen. Yesterday I watched that, hiding under a rock, and I saw you steal to the head of the launder, and I observed you salting the water with gold-dust. *Now* I know exactly how the fraud is carried out. Are you aware of the consequences? I have only to apply to a magistrate for a warrant, and you are

arrested and committed to gaol, and there you will probably lie for many months.'

Cobbledick's face became livid.

'I do not want to throw you into prison, partly because I believe you have acted in ignorance of what you were doing, but chiefly because I wish to fix the noose round the right throats.'

'Cap'n[1] Tramplara set me on it,' said Cobbledick; 'he sed, if I didn't do 'zackly as he wanted, he'd tear down the Giant's Table, and be altogether the ruin o' me. He'd got that hold on Squire Battishill that *he* couldn't help me. And I did it to save myself.'

'I am quite aware that Mr. Tramplara made you his tool, and I do not want you to suffer, if it can be avoided, because you have been an ignorant and unwilling tool.'

'Unwilling,' echoed Grizzly, 'I'll swear; glory rallaluley.'

'I repeat that I wish to spare you because you were an ignorant tool, and also, and that especially, because of poor Joyce, who would be heart-broken were anything to happen to you, unnatural father though you be.'

'Ah! sure-ly it 'ud kill Joyce. Her be that tooked up wi' me, her can't abide as no

[1] The head of a mine bears the title of captain.

harm should come to I. What 'ud her do without me, I'd like to know? Where'd her get meat, and clothes, and fire? If I were tooked and put in the lock-up, her'd die right on end wi' fright and hunger.'

The mean old man enforced this view of the case, thinking to deepen Herring's reluctance to compromise him.

'There may be two opinions about that,' said Herring: 'suffice it, however, that for the sake of Joyce I would spare you. Now the only way this can be done is for you to decline salting the water to-morrow, when I and other witnesses will be there to see the thing done, and I shall be prepared to arrest the doer.'

'If I don't do it, then it be Joyce who does.'

'But Joyce must not do it. Who is in charge of the mine this week?'

'Young Sampson Tramplara.'

'Very well; tell him that you can't be there.'

'Ow!' yelped the old man, 'I be took already cruel wi' the rheumatics. I reckon in another half a wink I shan't be able to stir neither voot nor hand.'

'So let it be. Your rheumatism incapacitates you from attending to your work, and Joyce is sent far off, on an errand.

Then Mr. Sampson will employ another man.'

'He'll do it hisself. He don't let no one else into the dodge except me and Joyce.'

'So much the better. Then we shall catch the prime culprit in the act. Now, Cobbledick, you understand. Not one word of this must be repeated. If you let out what I have told you, then your chance of escape is gone. I shall have you arrested this evening, and you will spend the night in the lock-up. You comprehend this?'

The old man put his dirty finger to his eye and winked. 'My grandfer wasn't Jonadab the son o' Rechab. I arn't a vule, it be them as goes to Ophir as be the vules.'

Herring left him. Then Cobbledick's face changed. He was fairly frightened. He sought Joyce at once ; no suspicion crossed him that she had betrayed the secret.

'Joyce,' he said in a hoarse whisper, 'the thing's a' busted blazes high.'

'What be, vaither?'

'Hophir, as they calls it. The young maister hev a found out all about 'n.'

Joyce was alarmed ; she looked uneasily at her father, but there was no anger in his face.

'Joyce,' he went on, 'that old Cap'n

Tramplara hev never gived me what he've a promised.'

'What hev he a promised'y?'

'He sed he'd a give me as many pounds o' backie as I worked days for he, a salting o' the water. He arn't paid me not these three weeks. See here, I ha' notched it on thicky stone. Now he don't know nothing o' this here bust-up. And when he do hear, then he'll not give me no backie more. And, I reckon, he won't pay me that he already owes me. So you cut along to Lanson so vast as your legs can carry you.'

'Vaither, I know nothing o' the road.'

'You cut right on end after the tip o' your nose,' he said, 'and you cut so vast as you can. You cannot miss 'n. And mind, you must get there afore the news of the bust-up do come to the Cap'n, and you tell 'n this: "Give me the backie in pounds"—that's just so many pounds as you've fingers and toes on your body, and one over for your head. Now don't you be a jackass and forget that one over. A head is every mite as much consekance to a human cretur as his little toe. And you say to 'n: "Give me as much backie in pounds as I've fingers and toes, and a head;" and you hold 'n out all straight afor 'n

that he may count mun hisself. And you mind you don't forget to reckon your head in. Then you go on and say, "I'll tell'y something mighty partickler about Ophir." Say as vaither sent me lopping all the way, so hard as I could lop. And if he gives you the backie, then you can tell 'n all—how the young maister hev found out all about 'n, and be agoing to lock up him and the young Cap'n Sampson in gaol. But if he don't give'y the backie, then you can just please yourself and tell 'n nothing. There now, don't'y bide about, but cut away.'

'But you, vaither! Will you get into trouble?'

'I—I'm about to be took cruel bad wi' rheumatics, and what they calls the loinbagey. Now, afore you goes to Lanson, just you cut down to Ophir, and tell Cap'n Sampson I wants to see 'n mighty partickler here to the Table.'

An hour later, young Sampson Tramplara was at the cromlech. As he approached, he heard moaning and cries issuing from the interior.

'What the devil is the matter here?' he asked, looking in. 'Who is that howling and groaning?'

'Oh, Cap'n, it be me; I be took cruel bad wi' rheumatics and the loinbagey.'

'Well, I'm not your doctor.'

'I sent to tell'y that I couldn't fulfil my duty to-day there to Ophir.'

'Then your daughter can do it.'

'Her's off to Lanson.'

'What the devil is she gone there for?'

'Sure, after my backie. Your vaither he promised me a pound a day for the work I did, and he arn't paid me for a long while. Look'y there, I ha' notched it all on the stone. There be as many days as you have fingers and toes, and your head chucked in as well.'

'You fool!' exclaimed young Tramplara, 'why did you not apply to me, instead of sending all the way to Launceston for it?'

'Cos, if I'd ha' axed you, you'd ha' throwed a curse at me instead o' a pound o' backie.'

'You damned blockhead,' swore the young man, angrily.

'There—I sed as much. I'd rather hev the backie, though 'tother don't hurt, it only tickles.'

'Curse it,' exclaimed Sampson, in a violent rage; 'there is a particular reason to-day why I want the water well salted. Damn

your rheumatism; you *must* be at your post.'

'I can't and I won't,' said Grizzly, sulkily.

'It is. You won't, not you can't,' blustered Sampson; then he gathered his stick short in his hand, and catching the old man by the ragged collar of his coat, he beat him well, pouring forth at the same time a volley of curses.

'This is all sham; I don't believe in your rheumatism. This is idleness. You are a good-for-nothing scoundrel. I'll give you occasion to moan and cry out.'

'You leave me alone, Cap'n,' yelled Cobbledick. 'You forget, I reckon, that I hev got the hanging of'y in my hands.'

'It may be so, but you forget that if I swing you swing also; one rope will do for both of us,' said Sampson. 'And for that reason I do not fear you in the least. Now then, will you do your work again to-day?'

'I can't.'

'I'll give you five pounds of backie.'

'I say what I sez; I can't do it.'

'Then,' said young Sampson, 'there is no help for it; I must manage the job myself.'

'You'd better,' assented Grizzly; 'if I was you, I wouldn't trust nobody else.'

'I don't mean to,' answered Sampson. He was panting after the thrashing he had administered, and as he cooled he began to question his discretion in giving way to his brutality. 'I say, Cobbledick, you mind this; you and I and my father are all in the same box, and you in the worst compartment of it, for it is you who have put the dust in. My father and I can always put on the look of innocence and throw the blame on you. You, if the rope has to be tasted, you will have the first bite.'

'I understand,' said the old man, putting his finger to his eye. 'Jonadab the son of Rechab weren't my father. I ain't a vule; it be they as goes to Ophir be the vules.'

'You won't take it ill that I thrashed you. You put me out, and I am naturally of a quick temper.'

'I say, Cap'n; I wouldn't let none else do the job to-day. I'd do it myself if I was you.'

'I intend to. I told you I did.'

'That be right. Do it yourself.'

Then young Sampson left the den. As he was turning away, he thought he heard loud laughter from within. He was of a suspicious nature, and he turned back.

'What are you laughing at, Cobbledick?'

'I bain't laughing; I be screeching wi' pain. What wi' the rheumatics, and the loin-bagey, and the licking I ha' had, I hev cause to, I reckon; and I sez glory rallaluley be-tween the twinges by way of easement.'

CHAPTER XXVIII.

CAUGHT IN THE ACT.

Whilst young Sampson was with Old Grizzly in his den, Herring was on his way down the Okehampton road to meet the constable at a spot already agreed upon. When he came to the point near the stream where the track to Ophir diverged from the high road, he found two post carriages drawn up in the way, from which were descending a party of grave-looking persons of a hard appearance of face, as if they were all in a spiritual and mental ironmongery trade. They were under the lead of the Rev. Israel Flamank, who was about to conduct them over the mine.

The way to it across the moor was rough, and not good travelling for a carriage. The chaises were ordered to go to Zeal, and the party, well supplied with comestibles, prepared to walk to Ophir, examine the washing of the gold, and then picnic in a serio-speculative mood on the moor.

Mr. Flamank was a veritable decoy-duck to the Tramplaras. Full of enthusiasm, earnest in belief, transparently sincere, he impressed even those who had cool judgments. He looked on Ophir as his own discovery, and was proud of it. To hear him talk, the Bible was written as a huge puff of Ophir, and the Christian ministry called into existence to tout for shares.

Herring was slightly acquainted with him. He had seen him several times at Ophir, and he knew that the man was sincere and honest. He pitied him because he saw him running headforemost to moral and pecuniary ruin. As he passed, he raised his hat to Mr. Flamank, who responded with a few words on the weather.

Herring observed him for a moment or two. Flamank was an excitable little man, and was specially excited on this occasion. On this occasion he had brought with him several men of means as well as piety, whom he particularly desired to secure for Ophir. Their faith was weak. They were ready enough to believe, with a thin kettle-broth faith, in any folly that would not cost them money, but when it came to embarking capital they asked to be established in their faith.

Herring was so kind at heart that, moved by a sudden impulse of pity, he resolved to give Flamank a chance of extricating himself from the wreck, unhurt in character if not in pocket. He called the pastor aside, and asked him to spare him a few moments.

'I am very busy,' said the minister, looking over his shoulder; 'I have a large party here, I cannot well be spared.'

'Sir, what I have to say to you is of the utmost importance. Send the party on with the promise of rejoining it. There is no possibility of their mistaking the way, which is well trampled like that which led to the den of the sick lion.'

'Very well, as you wish,' answered Israel, resignedly.

When all had departed, and Herring was quite alone with Mr. Flamank, he told him everything with complete frankness, and assured him of the total and irretrievable collapse of Ophir within a couple of hours. To say that the pastor was aghast is to understate the case; and yet he was unable at once to realise the completeness of the ruin with which he and Ophir were menaced.

'Nothing will shake my faith in the Phœnicians having been here,' he said. 'We are expressly told that Ophir lies between

Meshaw and Sheepstor, and this place is exactly halfway between them as the crow flies.'

'But it is a long flight for the crow, and there are many other places where Ophir may be found beside this. Here we have distinct evidence of dishonesty.'

'There is evil always mixed with good, and falsehood is associated with truth,' sighed Mr. Flamank. 'It may be—of course, as you state you have seen it, it must be—that there is trickery here, but still Ophir *is* somewhere hereabouts.'

'That of course is possible. But we have not now to consider the whereabouts of Ophir, but the whereabouts of your reputation and your capital, both sunk in this swindle.' Then the full truth of Herring's words came home to the Reverend Israel. He sobbed and clasped his hands convulsively. 'Good Lord!' he moaned, 'avert this blow from me. I am prostrate! I do not so much mind the loss of all my little savings intrusted to Trampleasure for the purposes of the mine, as the loss of my character, the ruin of my influence, the destruction of my position. I have spoken and written about Ophir, and induced so many to embark their little means in it! Believing widows and Christian old

maids have ventured their all in Ophir. I have urged them to it, assuring them it was a sound venture; I have shown them the sure word of prophecy speaking of Ophir; and now, what will become of them and of me?'

'My purpose is to ride to Launceston and have old Mr. Trampleasure arrested before he hears the news and can decamp with the money.'

'Oh, Mr. Herring, what is to be done? What can I do to put myself right?'

'I see one course open to you. You come with me and the constable and watch the process of salting, and help us to secure young Sampson Tramplara, or whoever does it. You will give evidence against those who are acting fraudulently. You will assist me in exposing the rascality. It will not then be possible for your good name to suffer, though your pocket may and probably will be lighter.'

'Thank you, thank you so much, Mr. Herring,' said the unfortunate man; 'I shall never be able to repay what you are doing for me save by my prayers. I accept your proposal. How is it to be carried out?'

'You must go after your friends, and make some excuse for deserting them. Then return to me, and I will take you with me.

I must start the constable, who is going to the same spot by another route. Stay ! you have a brown speckled shawl over your arm.'

'It belongs to a lady of my party.'

'Take it with you. Your black suit might be visible, but enveloped in the shawl you will be unobserved amidst the heather.'

The moor was clear. No one was visible on the flank of Cosdon or on the hill-side opposite, as Herring and his companion stole cautiously under cover to a place which commanded the sluice. Herring placed the pastor at some distance from himself ; he wished the constable to be with him, so that they might make a rush together on the man they desired to take.

The constable had made a considerable détour ; he had, in fact, worked round the hill from an opposite direction. Herring was on the look-out for him, and signed to him with a handkerchief fluttered behind a rock where to rejoin him.

The day was bright, but a cool wind blew from the north-west, rolling scattered masses of white cloud, like giant icebergs floating in a polar sea. Autumn was closing in. The days were shortening, the fern becoming russet, the heath had lost its bells ; only a

few sprigs of heather retained their harsh, dry blossoms. The gorse no longer bloomed throughout, though here and there one little gold flower still showed. 'When the furze is out of bloom, then sweet love is out of tune,' says a Devonshire proverb, which acquires its force from the fact that the gorse is in flower throughout the year. The whortleberry leaves were turned orange and crimson. Out of the peat the coral moss showed its scarlet incrustations.

'To my thinking,' said the constable, who found silence irksome, 'the worts' (whortleberries) 'of the wood ain't to compare with the worts of the moor. The wood worts is the bigger, but the moor worts is the sweeter. Do you like wort-pie with clotted cream on it as thick as the pastry?'

Herring nodded.

'He who don't like that don't know what good living is,' said the constable.

This functionary was a stout man, with a florid face and very pale blue eyes. He was silent for a while, and then he began again.

'I suppose I mightn't stand up and stretch my legs,' he asked; 'I'm in such a constrained and awkerd position sitting here on my 'aunches so long.'

'Certainly not,' said Herring, hastily. 'I entreat you to remain as you are.'

'There was a little fellow I knowed when I was a boy in Tawton—he's dead now. He had been to sea, but he warn't good for much, he were so small in size. He've a told me oft and oft the tale how he were tooked by pirates in the Mediterranean, and sold as a slave at Morocco, in one of them American States, I reckon. He said that the Moors couldn't make much of 'n, he were so small. He were no good to work in the mines, and he were no good to wheel weights. So, as they was determined to have their money's worth out of he, they made 'n sit day and night in one constrained and unnatteral position—hatching turkey eggs.'

Then he relapsed into silence, but not for long.

Presently he spoke again. 'I s'pose I mayn't light a pipe?' his faint mild eyes looked pleadingly at Herring.

'Certainly not.'

'I didn't s'pose I might. I axed because it be tedious waiting. No offence meant.'

After a further weary pause, he said in an undertone—'You don't think now, master, that he we be going to take will prove dangerous?'

'I dare say he will show fight. If he be young Mr. Sampson Tramplara, he probably will.'

'Oh!' the rosy apple cheeks looked less cheery. 'Look here, sir; my body be as big as a rhinoceros, but my soul be no bigger than a nit. There seems a deal o' me, looking at me cursorily, sir; but it ain't heart, sir, it be bacon.'

'Hush!' whispered Herring, 'look out. Here comes some one from the mine.'

'That be young Mr. Sampson Tramplara,' said the constable. 'From battle, murder, and sudden death, good Lord deliver us.' He spoke in an undertone. The wind blew up the valley, and there was not the remotest chance of his being heard. Then he added in a whisper, 'You'll mind what I said, in confidence, sir, about my courage. I'll back any one up, sir, but don't'y thrust me forrard. There be divarsity of gifts, and I be famous at backing.'

Herring held up his finger. He looked in the direction of Flamank, but could not distinguish him. He was among the tufts of brown heather, and the speckled cloak was over him, completely merging him in the bushes.

'Keep a sharp look-out,' whispered

Herring, 'and when I touch you, spring up, and run with me down on Sampson Tram-pleasure. We must not let him slip away.'

They saw the young man come stealthily up the valley, looking right and left, evidently somewhat uneasy. The 'leat' or channel of water came to a grip in the moor-side, and was carried over it in a long wooden launder on daddy long-legs' supports. The stream was conveyed thence, still in wood, and covered, round an elbow of hill, and reached the washing-floors by a rapid incline. A wire conducted on poles from the mine to the sluice let the water on without the necessity of ascending to the launder head, which was invisible from the mine itself.

The stamping-mills were working, and the drum was revolving and grinding. A second leat carried the water to put these in motion. Herring and the constable could hear the thud, thud of the hammers and the monotonous crunching of the crusher.

Young Tramplara knelt down by the sluice, and took a packet from his breast pocket. Presently the poles supporting the wire creaked and swung in the direction of Ophir, and the sluice door was lifted. At once the water rushed down the wooden trough, and Sampson was seen, after a furtive

glance round, to sprinkle the advancing stream with the contents of his packet.

Herring touched the constable, and both rose and advanced from behind the rock. Tramplara's back was towards them, and he was unaware of their approach. The wind was from him, and he did not hear their steps. At the same time the Reverend Israel Flamank rose and shook off his brown shawl. Herring and the constable were within a few paces of the young man, when he stood up, dusted his hands, and turned. Instantly he saw them, and uttered a cry of mingled rage and alarm. He turned sharply to run; then, thinking better of it, turned back again, and faced them, and, quick as thought, drew a pistol from his pocket and presented it at the head of John Herring. As he fixed him with his eye, Sampson recognised with whom he had to do, and Herring saw the flash of recognition in his evil eye. 'By God!' said Sampson between his teeth, 'I am not sorry for this. I'll settle old accounts with you this minute.'

Herring saw the finger twitch at the trigger, and instinctively bent his head. He heard the report at the same moment, followed by a cry and a heavy fall behind him.

He was himself unhurt, and his first im-

pulse was to close with Sampson, but, turning his head, he saw the constable lying motionless, and, with a call to Mr. Flamank to run after Sampson, he stooped over the prostrate man.

The constable's face was mottled; all colour had deserted it but a dead purple in blotches in the cheeks. His eyes were closed, and he was motionless. Seeing the pistol produced, the worthy man had sprung behind John Herring, true to his word that he was good at backing. When Herring bent his head, the constable had received the charge which was designed to blow out Herring's brains.

John Herring scooped water out of the stream, and threw it over the poor fellow's face. Then he tore off his neckcloth, and ripped open his waistcoat in search of the wound. The freshness of the water brought the man round. He opened his pale eyes, looked scaredly at Herring, and closed them again.

'Are you much hurt? Where did the shot strike?' asked John Herring.

Again the constable opened his eyes cautiously, and now he turned his head stiffly.

'Where is he?' he asked huskily.

'He has run away. Are you seriously hurt?'

'Very,' sighed the poor man.

'But where?'

'I can't speak yet. Wait a bit, and I will tell'y.'

In the meantime Sampson Trampleasure was running. He stopped his flight after he had gone some little distance, and looked back. He saw Herring bowed over the prostrate man, opening his waistcoat and uncovering his breast. With a curse, he turned and ran on.

Flamank, with tails flying, waving the brown shawl like a lasso over his head, ran after him, shouting, 'Heigh! stop, Mr. Sampson! stop! You have killed the constable! You must be hung! Stay and let me catch you!'

'Try to stand,' said Herring to the constable. He lifted him to his feet.

'I be the father of fourteen, and another coming,' said the poor man. He was dreadfully frightened; he peered about him in all directions.

'And the eldest fifteen,' he murmured. 'Be you sure the murderous ruffian be out o' harm's way?'

'Certain. Have you been hit?'

'Ay, I have.'

'Then where?'

'Here,' said the constable, holding up his hat.

The ball had gone clean through it.

Just then Mr. Flamank returned, panting and very hot.

'I can't catch him. I have run and shouted my best, but he would not wait to be caught.'

'He shall not escape me,' said Herring.

CHAPTER XXIX.

A RACE.

Sampson Trampleasure ran to the mine, burst through the assembled visitors, who tried to arrest him with inquiries after Mr. Flamank, and about the washings and cradlings and puddlings, and the whips and whims. He had an oath and a curse for all who stood in his way. He thrust to the stable, where he saddled and bridled his horse, and, in another moment, was galloping over the rough road.

The shocked visitors shook their heads, and concluded that there had been a breakage in the machinery. It did not occur to them that there had been a break-up of the entire concern. That fact was revealed to them later by the Rev. Israel Flamank.

Sampson Trampleasure reached the Okehampton road and sped along it in the Launceston direction. When he had crossed the bridge over the Taw at Sticklepath, and was

ascending the hill on the other side, he looked back and saw some one on a grey in pursuit. He knew the grey mare—she belonged to Mr. Battishill, and he was certain that John Herring bestrode her.

'Ah!' said Sampson; 'a race between us which shall reach Launceston first.'

Mr. Battishill's mare had been a good horse once, but was now old. Sampson had a young and sound cob under him. The mare would be unable to endure so long a journey, she must be exchanged at one of the next stations. Sampson knew he could keep his distance and get first to Launceston, but that was not sufficient. He must delay Herring long enough to allow him to see his father, and, with or without his father, to leave Launceston before Herring rode through its gate. Believing that he had killed a man, he was in great fear for himself, and he would not have scrupled to fly without warning his father, but that he was unsupplied with money. He must make for a seaport that same night; an hour would suffice, if he could gain that.

The sun was setting as he rode over Sourton Down. There was a turnpike there. He called the man of the bar to him.

'You know me. I am Sampson Tram-

pleasure, junior. I am riding a race with a gentleman for a wager ; my horse is getting beat, and I must secure a fresh mount at Bridestowe. Here is a guinea ; I will give you four more if you will delay the gentleman a quarter of an hour.'

'All right, sir! We have to go some ways for our tea-water ; I'll fasten the bar and go for mine.'

Sampson did not wait to hear how Herring was to be detained ; he rode as hard as he could down the hill to Bridestowe, and drew up at the inn door.

'Here!' he shouted, 'give my horse some gruel ; he is beat. Have you a horse I can hire, hostler ? Mine won't carry me to Launceston.'

'He's not done yet,' said the hostler. 'Most of our osses be gone on wi' two chaises, but there be one in the stables that be fresh. But how about getting of her back again?'

'I'll leave mine if I take her,' said Sampson. 'I'm back again to-morrow, and I'll ride her here.'

'You can look at her,' said the hostler ; 'her ain't a beauty to look at, but her can go brave enough.'

Sampson went into the stable. Presently he came out.

'No, Daniel, I don't like her looks. Be sharp with the gruel and put a quart of your strongest ale into it; my bay will carry me with that inside him.'

The hostler went leisurely about his work.

'Daniel, this won't do. There has been a breakage at Ophir, and I must be sharp and tell my father. We must be back to-morrow before daybreak, or everything will be spoiled.'

'All right, sir; I'll look peart.'

Sampson was not satisfied with the man's undertaking to look alert. He went himself to the bar and gave his bay a quart of ale.

As he was galloping out of Bridestowe, he heard the clatter of horse's hoofs descending the hard road from Sourton Down, and he knew that Herring was at his heels.

Herring had reached the toll-gate, and found it barred. He had been unable to make the man hear. He found both the gate-house and bar locked. He was greatly annoyed, and, riding back, lashed his grey, and tried to make her leap the bar. But the mare was too old and tired to risk it, and she swerved. Then he tried to get round by a side lane, and through fields, but found this also impracticable. Full a quarter of an hour passed before he could get through. The man

arrived at last, put down his water-can, and leisurely unfastened the bar. Herring was in too great haste to waste time in remonstrance.

The grey was failing; she tripped, and almost fell several times in descending the hill to Bridestowe. He drew rein at the inn, and called, 'Hostler! here, I say!'

'All right, sir.'

'Have you a spare horse? I must ride on at once.'

'There've a been a gent here already inquiring,' said Daniel. 'Be you come from the same quarter?'

'I want a horse at once. I have no time for answering questions.'

'Because, if you be,' continued Daniel, composedly, 'there be no 'urry. The gent, that be young Mr. Tramplara, have a gone ahead already with the news. He says he must tell his father at once, and they'll be back early to-morrow morning.'

'Have you a horse, or not?'

'He sed, afore daybreak. Them was his very words.'

Herring was out of his saddle. 'The grey cannot go on. You must let me have a horse.'

'This grey ain't got the go in her like the

bay Maister Tramplara rode. How old be her?'

'Never mind the age.' He drew the fellow's hand away as he was turning up the lips to examine the teeth. 'Is there a horse available?'

'There be one, sure,' answered Daniel; 'I offered her to the young Maister Tramplara, but he wouldn't have her. Her's not so bad to go, but the looks of her ain't nothing to boast of.'

'Off with the saddle and bridle, and bring her round.'

The hostler, a little man, with his toes turned in, very broad in body but short in stature, scuffled into the stable, and was a long time before he reappeared. Herring was impatient. He took a glass of cyder at the bar, and then went to the stable and met the little man coming out.

'There be summat the matter wi' the oss,' he said. 'Her's lame. Bide a wink, and I'll fetch a lantern.'

After having found a lantern, adjusted a tallow candle in the socket, and lighted it, Daniel went with Herring into the stable. The horse that was so good to go could not go a step. She was dead lame.

'Here,' said Herring; 'hold the light.

Take the candle out of the lantern, and I'll turn up her hoofs. There it is!'

A knife-blade had been driven into the frog of the off front hoof, and snapped short in it.

'Is the Squire home at Lea Wood?' asked Herring. He set his teeth, and his brow contracted; his blood was up.

'I reckon he be, unless he be away,' answered Daniel.

Herring ran to his grey, re-saddled her, and rode out of the village to the house, situated a mile outside. He rang the bell, and asked to be allowed to see Mr. Hamlyn for a moment, and the Squire came to him in the hall. Herring told his story—that he was in pursuit of a man, with a warrant for his apprehension in his pocket. He drew it forth. He related how the horse had been wilfully lamed at the post-house to arrest him, and he begged to be allowed the use of one of the Squire's horses. His request was at once and readily granted. In a quarter of an hour he was well-mounted on a fine horse —Squire Hamlyn was noted for his good horses—a horse perfectly fresh, and was in full and fast pursuit. 'If I do not catch you now,' said Herring, laughing bitterly, 'it will not be my fault.'

But much time had been lost. It was already dusk. In another half-hour it would be dark. The heavy clouds that had rolled in broken masses through the sky all day had spread out over the entire surface, and obscured all light from the stars. Only to the west the declining day looked wanly over the ragged fringe of Cornish moorland heights. The road was no longer over open down, but ran between hedges, with trees on both sides. It lay in valleys with high hills well wooded folding round; the hills cut off the light, the dark foliage absorbed it. Sampson Tramplara was pushing on as well as he could, but his bay was feeling the length of the journey and the pace.

'Get out of the road, confound you!' shouted Sampson, as a dark figure was overtaken and made his horse swerve. 'What the devil do you mean by not standing aside?' Sampson had a hunting whip, his hand through the loop. He lashed at the foot-traveller, as he trotted by, with an oath. It was too dark for him to discern a face, but he saw that the person was a woman. It did not matter, the lash had curled round her. She must learn a lesson—so hard to teach women and pigs—that when a rider is in the road she must get on one side. He could not

have hurt her, as she uttered no cry. Sampson was without spurs, but he dug his heels into the flanks of his bay and urged him on to a canter. Then he heard distinctly the clatter of horse-hoofs coming along the road at a good pace—at a gallop. Herring had got a fresh mount, and would be up with him in ten minutes. His bay could not get on faster—that was impossible. What was to be done?'

Sampson looked back along the road. He could no longer see the foot-passenger. She had doubtless gone down a side lane. There was light enough for him to see that the road was clear. He had come to a place where heavy oak woods closed in on the highway, and the trees overarched making it doubly obscure. If Herring was to be stayed, this was the place, now was the time; in another ten minutes it would be too late. Further on the road would be lighter and less solitary.

Quick as thought, Tramplara dismounted and led his horse along the road to a gate. He unfastened the gate, and took the bay through into the wood, where he tied him up behind the hedge. Then he unhinged the gate—it was a large five-barred gate—and with some little effort carried it into the road, and threw it down across it.

He looked at his legs ; he wore light tight breeches—they would be seen if he stood aside in the hedge, waiting the result. So he went through the gateway and leaned his back against the post, standing inside with his arms folded. If there had been sufficient light, and any one had been there to note his face, an ugly smile would have been seen covering it. 'By God,' he muttered, 'he escaped me once to-day : this time he shall not escape.'

He heard the tramp of the horse approach nearer ; it was descending a hill, and muffled, then ascending the next. Herring's voice was audible, cheering on his horse. Not another sound but the rush of the Lew Water, a petty river, swirling over its stony bed, and breaking against snags of timber that had fallen from the banks.

Yes ! a night-jar in the wood screeched ; then was silent, then screeched again intermittently, as though signalling danger.

Late in the year though it was, in the hedge, close to Sampson, was a glow-worm. The light annoyed him. He could distinguish by it the crane's-bill leaf on which the insect sat. He put up his foot and broke down the earth, and then stamped it and the luminous little creature together. Through the inter-

stices of the clouds one star was visible. He would have torn it out of the sky and stamped it to darkness in the mire, if he could have reached it.

Louder, more distinctly, came the clatter of hoofs. The road was level, and the pace of the horse accelerated. 'On, old fellow, we shall soon be up with him!'

Sampson heard Herring's voice almost in his ear. His heart gave a bound, and then—a cry, a crash, and, for a moment, silence.

'The gate has done it,' said Sampson Tramplara, stepping lightly into the road.

He was right; the gate had done it. The horse had been spurred on to a good speed, and neither he nor his rider had noticed the obstruction till the poor brute's legs were between the rails, and he was down and floundering. Herring was flung, and lay his length on the road. Sampson went up to him; he was unconscious. Then Sampson turned his attention to the horse.

'Where did Herring get this brute?' he asked. 'He'll do for me, if he has not hurt himself. Come up, old fellow, don't lie and go to sleep there.'

He took the reins, and brought the horse up on his haunches, but the poor animal was

unable to stand. He had broken or severely injured one foot.

'No good to me,' said Sampson; 'lie as you are. I must force my bay to go on.'

He went back to Herring, and stood over him, a foot on each side. Then he drew the pistol out of his pocket.

'This time you shall not escape me,' he said with an oath; 'I'll take precious good care of that.' And he put the muzzle of his weapon to the ear of the unconscious man. 'Ah! you're deaf enough now, but I'll bark into your ear such a bark as will make you jump into eternity. I reckon I have done for one man to-day, and if I have to run at all, I may as well run for two as for one.'

He drew the trigger, but no report followed.

'Curse it!' he said, and flung the weapon on the road; 'I forgot I had already fired it off, and haven't had time to load again.' He paused, still astride over Herring. 'It is just as well,' he said; 'I can beat your brains out as well as blow them out, and then no one will know but what you smashed your skull in your fall. Where's that pistol?'

He turned to look for it where he had thrown it. It was too dark for him to see, so he groped in the road till he found it.

Then he came back to Herring, lying unconscious and without motion.

'I wonder is he dead already?' he said, and felt him, and put his hand to his heart.

'He's alive for the moment,' muttered Sampson, 'but not enjoying life now, nor like to have another and a sweeter taste of it. So, my boy—one for Ophir—one for me—and one for Mirelle! You threatened to break a ruler across my head, did you? I'll break something a deal harder over yours, or batter yours in.' He drew a long breath and raised his hand, holding the pistol by the muzzle. 'Ready,' he shouted; 'here goes!—one for——'

A scream of fury and fear combined, the scream of a beast rather than of a human being, and, in a moment, some one was on him, grasping his arm, and wrapping him round in rags rank with peat smoke. He could hardly make out who or what had grappled with him. He tried to disengage himself, but the hands, with long nails like claws, tore at him, and the rags entangled his arms, and the hoarse, discordant shrieks in his ear deafened, bewildered him.

Had a scarecrow assumed life, or leaped on him from a field, to arrest his murderous

hand, or had some spectre of the wood, some dead creature, risen out of the leaf-mould that had covered it to attack him? For a moment fear curdled his heart's blood and paralysed his arm; and the creature, whatever it was, took advantage of the moment to wrench the whip out of his hand.

'I'll kill you! I'll rip your heart and liver out wi' my nails. I'll bite my way through to 'em——'

Then Sampson recovered himself. He knew with whom he had to do.

'Keep off, Joyce, you fool!' he shouted, and thrust her from him with a blow. But like a tiger she leaped at him again, and bit at his hand and screamed. In her mad fury she could scarce form and utter words. Sampson Tramplara backed to the gate, defending himself with his pistol. He struck her repeatedly, but she felt nothing. If he had cut her with a knife she would not have known it, dominated as she was by her fury.

'You fool, Joyce, let me alone, or I will kill you!'

'You've killed the maister, you've killed 'n. I'll tear you to bits, I will.'

'Stand back! look to your master. If you want him to live, you must mind him at once.'

That answered ; that alone could have answered.

She drew back.

'I'll see,' she said ; 'if you've killed 'n, you'll niver escape me. I'll hunt you over airth and under water ; I'll go after'y through the very fire. You'll not escape me. I'll see if he be alive or dead, but happen what may,' she said, and raised his whip over her head, 'you shall take that for a first taste.' Then she brought the lash down with all the weight of her arm, and the force her fury lent her, across his face. The lash cut it, and he staggered back and put his hands over his eyes, and cried out with pain. Then she stepped back to where Herring lay in the road. Young Tramplara stood for a moment, blinded with the blow and convulsed with rage. His first impulse was to rush after her and beat her down and stamp the life out of her. But prudence prevailed ; he took the opportunity to unhitch his horse, mount, and ride away.

Joyce flung herself in the road beside Herring. All the rage and roughness went out of her instantly. She felt him, to find if his bones were broken. Then she drew him up and laid his head in her bosom, and listened for his breath.

'My maister! my dear, dear maister!'

she cried, between fear and tears. 'My darling, my darling maister! speak now, speak, do'y?'

She rocked herself from side to side, moaning, swaying his head in her arms.

'Oh, maister, maister! what can I do?' She put her mouth to his, and breathed into his lungs the contents of her own. 'I'll give'y all the life that be in me, and welcome, if only I can make thee open your eyes again. You must not die. Speak, and let me know that you hear me. It be Joyce, your own poor Joyce, that has'y, and is a rocking of'y, and calling of'y to wake up. Maister, darling maister, do'y hear me? None shall touch you but me. I'll die afore I lets another near'y.' Then her tears broke forth; she felt her utter helplessness. 'They'll be coming for to take'y away, but they shall not do it.' She laid him back in the road, then stood up, removed the gate, and put it in its place; and then lifting Herring, she partly carried, partly drew him away, through the gate-opening into the wood; there she could hide both him and herself.

She took him again in her arms, and swayed herself to and fro, moaning and then breaking into snatches of song. In the wood she resolved she would remain; no one should

take him from her. If he were dead, there he should lie, dead, in her arms, on her lap, and she would sit over him watching and waiting patiently till she died also, and the leaves came down—copper-gold off the beech, and russet-brown off the oak—and buried them together.

But no! no!—he must not die! What could she do for him? He had known exactly what was right to do for her when 'she were all a broked in pieces.' He had known how to mend her, so that now she was well and strong again. But then he was a 'skollard,' and she—she was but a poor ignorant savage. What should she do? Go to a cottage and ask that he might be taken in there? Her heart shrank from this. She could not breathe in a house. There, others would surround him, and she would be thrust out. No! she would nurse him there, under the sky and the green trees, where the wind blew, and the grass sprang up, and the birds sang. All at once a thought struck her. In her sense of loneliness, helplessness, misery, an unutterable yearning came over her for some help that she could not define, not even understand. It was a vague effort of the poor dumb soul within to articulate a cry for help to—she knew not whom. She threw herself on her

knees beside the body, and stretched her arms from which depended the wretched rags torn to shreds, upwards towards the sky, and raised her face, quivering with agony, and cried hoarsely, again and again—'Our Vaither—kinkum-kum — kinkum-kum! Glory rallaluley!'

The star that Sampson Tramplara had seen and would have stamped out was shining aloft, and it smote through the leafy vault over her head, and sparkled in the tears that streamed over her cheeks.

So, throughout the night, she rocked her burden, and moaned, and pressed it to her bosom, and then knelt and wept, and cried—'Kinkum-kum! Kinkum-kum!'

CHAPTER XXX.

BETWEEN CUP AND LIP.

THAT same evening which had seen Herring flung senseless in the road was to decide the fate of Orange Tramplara. She was to be married that evening to Captain Trecarrel in the little chapel at his place. A dispensation had been obtained from the bishop (*in partibus*) to allow of the celebration out of canonical hours. The reason for this was that a priest was on his way to Plymouth from Camelford, and would arrive only in the afternoon—indeed, somewhat into the evening—by coach, and he would have to proceed very early next morning on his way to Plymouth. Consequently, the only manner in which it was convenient for the pair to receive the nuptial benediction from a Catholic priest was for the function to take place in the chapel at Trecarrel that evening somewhat late. On the morrow the Protestant ceremony was to

be performed in Launceston parish church, followed by the wedding breakfast. Thus it happened that, about the time the accident—if accident it may be called—happened to John Herring, as related in the last chapter, Orange was dressing for the marriage ceremony that was to take place in the Catholic chapel at Trecarrel, and Mirelle was assisting her, at Orange's special request.

Mirelle was not to be a bridesmaid. Orange had asked her to be one; she could not well have failed to do so; but Mirelle had declined, and the request had not been urged. Mirelle was glad to escape thus. She would have to be present during the ceremony at Trecarrel, but she would kneel in some shady corner, where her face could not be seen and her tears noticed. Mirelle had passed a trying time. A weight lay on her heart which she was unable to shake off. Even Mrs. Trampleasure had observed the change in her appearance: the sunken eyes, and the transparency of her cheek; but Mirelle had explained this by the climate, which affected her. She had been accustomed to sun. Cloud and rain depressed her, and affected both her health and her spirits. Orange was elated; victory was all but achieved. In a few hours she would be Mrs. Trecarrel of Trecarrel, and be translated

to another sphere from that in which circled her father and mother, Miss Bowdler, and the Reverend Flamank. Bah! her bridesmaids expected to be made much of after she was lady of Trecarrel, to be invited to her dances, to meet county people at her receptions, to be still 'Dear Jane,' and 'Darling Sophy,' and 'My sweet Rose.' They were very much mistaken. Once she had risen to her new perch she would peck at every presumptuous fowl that aspired to sit beside her.

'Mrs. Trecarrel of Trecarrel!' repeated Orange, as she surveyed herself in the glass. She would become her station, with her proud, handsome face and erect bearing. She had the figure and the dignity of a duchess. At least she supposed she had. That she was a fine woman could not be disputed, with a swelling bust, large and luscious eyes, a bright colour, ripe and sensuous lips, and magnificent dark, glossy, and abundant hair. A slight down, not enough to disfigure, showed on her upper lip—the badge of a warm and passionate nature.

'Father will be too much engaged to worry me,' she thought, 'and mother's cold will keep her from wetting her feet at Trecarrel. That is a comfort. As for Sampson, he shall not cross my threshold, unless I

invite him to shoot rabbits when I am sure no gentleman will be present.'

Mirelle was engaged on the rich but coarse hair of Orange. The delicate white fingers trembled, and were less skilful than usual.

'Really, Mirelle, you are clumsy this evening,' said Orange; 'you pull my hair and hurt me.' She looked before her into the glass.

'Are you crying, child?'

'No, Orange.'

'I thought I saw something glistening in your eye.'

Mirelle had the strength to repress her tears. She devoted her whole attention to that on which she was engaged.

'You will come occasionally and see me,' said Orange. 'I shall be so pleased to show you all I am doing; and I am certain the Captain will be delighted. Now, don't run the hair-pins into my head! I tell you, you hurt me. Really, Mirelle, you are very clumsy. What ails you this evening?'

Mirelle made no reply.

'Try on the orange-wreath and the veil, child,' said Miss Trampleasure.

Mirelle took up the wreath and adjusted it.

'The Captain has always been partial to-

wards you,' continued Orange. She was aware that what she said gave pain, but then, what triumph is complete without the infliction of wounds and agonies?

'Do you not think Harry is a handsome man? I do not believe I have ever seen, even in a woman, such beautiful and expressive eyes. There, Mirelle, is a pin with a large Cornish crystal in the head; put it in my hair and fasten my wreath with it.'

Mirelle did not, could not, speak. It was as much as she could do to maintain the mastery over her feelings.

'Do you know, you palefaced witch, I was at one time almost jealous of you. I thought the Captain was attentive to you—more attentive than he ought to be, and that you were trying to draw him away from me. Of course that was natural. Every girl begrudges another her lover, and would rob her of him if she could. It is a natural instinct. But Harry never really cared for you; he told me so; he was only playing—— Good heavens, Mirelle!' Orange sprang up, and the tears, tears of pain, started into her eyes. In a moment, in a flash of passion, she struck Mirelle on the cheek with her open hand.

'Do you know what you have done? You have run the pin into my head. Look—look!'

She snatched off her veil. 'How can I wear this? There is a spot of blood on it.'

Then Mirelle burst into tears. She had an excuse for them—she had been struck.

'I am sorry,' said Orange; 'but really you hurt me. Look at the blood, and convince yourself. I did not mean to strike you; but the pain was sharp, and I forgot myself. Do control yourself. Hark! I hear horses' feet. The carriage will be here directly, and we shall start for Trecarrel. Dry your eyes and control your feelings. You must not let people see that you have been crying, or they will say'—her malice gained the mastery once more—'that you loved the Captain, and were envious of me.'

Mirelle covered her face.

'Of course,' said Orange, looking hard at her, with her red lips twitching, 'there is not a shadow of truth in this; still, tongues are sharp and venomous, and such things will be said if you give occasion for them.'

Mirelle stood up, proud, cold, and impassive. In a moment she had conquered her feelings. Her pride was touched, and that recovered her.

'No one shall dare to say such things of me,' she answered. 'Sit down, and I will finish your toilette.'

The hoofs on the gravel that Orange had heard were those of Sampson's bay, now utterly tired out, and scarce able to carry his master up the steep ascent from the valley of the Tamar.

He sprang out of his saddle, and burst into the hall as his mother descended the stairs in a stiff myrtle green satin dress, with a cap on her head adorned with rose-coloured bows.

'Where is my father?' asked Sampson, abruptly.

'He is dressed, Sampy darling, and in the parlour. I'm going in there too. We expect the carriage shortly. The bridesmaids will be picked up at their own doors, but our carriage is coming here.'

He did not wait to hear her, but rushed into the drawing-room.

'By Grogs! Sampy,' exclaimed Mr. Trampleasure, 'what brings you here? I thought you were to remain in charge at Ophir, and give us your visits, as the wisest of men said, like angel visits, few and far between. I want you there, and not here, boy.'

'Father, I must speak with you instantly, and alone,' he added, as he saw his mother come rustling and sniffing in at the door. 'Let us go into the office.'

'Nothing wrong with Ophir, lad, eh?' asked the old man, his colour changing.

'Everything,' answered Sampson. 'For heaven's sake lead on. Not a moment is to be lost.'

Mr. Trampleasure was arrayed in evening dress, with a very white tight neckcloth, and very stiff projecting frills to his shirt. He was in a fine black cloth dress coat. His hair was as white as his frills. He took up a plated branch candlestick, and led the way. His hand shook.

'Take care, Tram, darling,' said Mrs. Trampleasure, 'you be a joggling of the wax all over the carpet, and it do take a time getting of it out with a hiron and blotting paper.'

He opened the door of the office and went in. He had been working, and smoking, and drinking there that afternoon; there was a fire burning red on the hearth. The room reeked with rum and tobacco.

The old man put the candle down, and then stayed himself with one hand on the table. 'By Grogs!' he said, 'you've given me a turn, Sampy. What do you mean by saying that everything is wrong with Ophir?'

'I mean what I say,' answered the young man. 'Ophir is smashed up. That cursed

fool Herring has found all out. Flamank knows also. They saw me salting the stream.'

The old man's face turned purple.

'That's not the worst—there's worse behind,' continued young Sampson. He hesitated a moment, and looked at his father. Mr. Trampleasure was feeling about him with the disengaged hand for his arm-chair. He gripped the table with the left. He tried to speak; he opened his mouth and shut it again. It was horrible to see him, like a fish, gasping, and nothing proceeding from his lips. 'It must come out. But first; father—we shall have to run for it. I especially. Where is the money?'

The old man pointed with a faltering hand in the direction of a strong box, let into the wall. Then he put his hand in his pocket and pulled out a bunch of keys. He tried to indicate a single key, but could not take his other hand from the table. The bunch fell on the floor.

'All right, governor,' said Sampson. 'Now I will tell you the worst, and a cursed ugly worst it is. You may as well hear it from me as from another. I must be off to-night —at once; you suit your convenience. Do as you like. You have nothing to fear but the stone jug; I the wooden horse. I have

shot one man dead to-day, the constable, and broken the neck of another, John Herring, so the two can keep each other company ; and I must make off.'

Then old Trampleasure dropped like a stone on the floor. There came a sudden blow within his head, as from a hammer, and he saw nothing more.

Sampson stood over him for a moment. No time was to be lost. Every minute was important. Whatever happened to his father, he—Sampson—must get clear away. He saw in a moment what had occurred. His father had been struck down with an apoplectic fit, and could not escape. Time was too precious to be wasted in attending to him. He could not afford to call for assistance. He stooped and took up the bunch of keys, and went to the strong box. Without much difficulty he unlocked it, and fell to wondering over his father's wisdom.

Old Trampleasure had feared discovery, and was prepared for a sudden emergency. All the money that had come into his hands had been reduced to the most portable form possible, in hundred-pound, fifty-pound, and ten-p und notes. There they lay in thick packets Sampson took them all. He left not one behind, and stowed them away in a

travelling valise of his father's, which the old man took with him when he went to Ophir for a few days.

Then Sampson opened the private door of the office, and, without another look at the old man lying prostrate, darted forth.

'What a time them two are in there together!' grumbled Mrs. Trampleasure; 'and, oh dear! there comes the chaise to take us to Trecarrel.' She ran to the foot of the stairs, and called, 'Orange dear! Orange! the carridge be here!'

'I am ready, mother,' answered the bride, descending.

The hall was well lighted; and as she came down, followed by Mirelle, she looked radiant, proud, triumphant. She waved back Mirelle, lest she should step on her veil, with an angry, insolent gesture.

'My word, Orange! you are a beauty! I'll run and call your father.'

But he was beyond call.

CHAPTER XXXI.

JOYCE'S PATIENT.

JOYCE and her patient could not remain concealed. Her cries had been heard when she fell—literally tooth and nail—on Sampson Tramplara, and those who heard them, being superstitious, thought best to keep away from the spot whence they had sounded.

Later in the evening the farmer of Coombow, coming home from a cattle fair, heard the moans and wailing in the wood, and was greatly scared by the injured horse, which had thrust itself into the hedge. So sincerely alarmed was he, and so thoroughly did his account of what he had heard and seen frighten his household, that not one of his sons—no, not all of them in phalanx, armed with pitchforks and lighted by lanthorns, would venture that night into the high road to ascertain the cause of the alarm.

With morning, however, courage came,

and early, when the day began to break, nearly the entire household, male and female, went out to see whether there was any natural explanation to be found for those things that had, in the darkness, so scared Farmer Facey.

The horse was found.

'Why! I'm blessed if this bain't Squire Hamlyn's roan,' said the farmer. 'I ought to know 'n becos I reared 'n. Now this be reg'lar curious.'

Joyce had been unable to retire with her burden far into the wood. The hillside was steep, and she could not carry the unconscious load far up. She had attempted to do so, fearing lest she should be seen, but when she raised him he moaned with pain. She was like a cat playing with a dead bird, putting it down, then lifting it and carrying it away, then putting it down again.

It was not long before she was discovered and surrounded.

'Who is he? How comes he here? How did this happen? Why didn't you bring him to the farm?'

Questions were poured upon her. She looked about her angrily, suspiciously, as a cat would look when surrounded with those who, she thinks, will deprive her of her bird, or at least dispute her sole possession of it.

'He be mine. I found 'n. I saved 'n. Capt'n Sampson Tramplara would ha' killed 'n, but I pervented 'n.'

'But who is he?'

'He be the maister. He mended me when I were gone scatt. Nobody shan't so much as touch 'n. I've got 'n fast, and I'll care for 'n, that I will. There—you can go, and leave us alone here. What be you a bothering here for? I didn't call'y.'

'Nonsense. He must be taken into a house, and put to bed,' said Mrs. Facey. 'Poor soul! Dear alive!'

'He shan't go under no house. If he goes anywhere, he shall go home.'

'Where is his home?'

'Where should it be but West Wyke?'

'What! West Wyke in South Tawton?'

'Sure-ly. Where else should it be? It don't jump about, now here, now there, I reckon.'

After much difficulty with Joyce, who was unreasonable in her jealousy and suspicion, it was decided that the farmer should send a waggon well bedded with straw, and that Joyce should be conveyed in this, with the still insensible man in her arms, to West Wyke.

There was no medical man nearer than

Okehampton, and West Wyke was not as distant from Okehampton as Coombow, the place where they were.

'I arn't got no money,' said Joyce, 'but I'll pay you for the waggon, sure enough.'

'I do not expect payment,' said Farmer Facey in a mildly deprecatory tone—a tone that implied he would yield the point if pressed. 'I dare say the gentleman, when he gets well, will remember me. And if he don't, well—he'll be sure to have relations as will do what be proper and respectable.'

'It be I,' said Joyce, defiantly, 'it be I as has to pay, and blast me blue if I don't.'

'Where will the money come from?' asked Facey, surveying her rags.

'I'll pay wi' thicky arms!' said Joyce, thrusting forth her hands. 'See! is there a man among you can work as I can? When the young maister be well, then, sure, I'll come and work for'y two months by the moon, I will, for the loan of the waggon to-day; and I'll ax for no meat nor no housing. I'll feed myself, and I'll sleep where I can, in the open air.'

'Her must be one of the Nymet savages, sure-ly,' said the farmer, in an undertone, to his wife.

Joyce's ears were keen, and she heard him.

'What if I be a savage?' she asked. 'I baint, like mun [them] to Nymet. Them be proper savages. Vaither be a head above they. He hev a got what he may call his own.'

The waggon was brought to the place, and two men lifted Herring into it. Joyce climbed in, and, after having seated herself in the straw, took him again in her arms.

'If the cart go over rough stones, it shall joggle me,' she said; 'I'll hold'y, maister dear, that you shan't feel it.'

'I say, maiden,' said Farmer Facey, looking over the rail of the waggon as they were about to start, 'when the young gentleman gets better, just tell him he was took home in Farmer Facey's waggon, with his team and horseman, Farmer Facey, to Coombow. He might like to know, you see, and, being a gentleman, as I take it, he won't forget.'

Just as the cart was off, he called to the driver, 'Stay a bit, Jim! I think I'll take a lift, too, as far as to Bridestowe, and I'll just up and see the Squire. I'll tell him what has happened to poor Major; and, as it chances, I've another horse out of the same mare, I can sell 'n—a tidy sort of a dark roan, you minds 'n, Jim. Mebbe we'll strike a bargain. I'll go wi' you now on the chance.'

At Bridestowe the waggon came to a long halt. Farmer Facey descended ; the driver was thirsty. He had much to tell. A crowd gathered round the cart. Daniel, the hostler, climbed up the wheel to look into the face of Herring, and would have mounted the waggon had not Joyce beat him off with Sampson's whip.

'Sure it be he, poor young man,' said Daniel. 'I know by token he forgot to chuck me a sixpence last night. 'Tis he as went after the Squire's horse. How came this about? Do'y say as Major hev a foreleg broke? Well, now, Loramussy! how can that have happened? The young gent may come round, right enough, but the oss—he must be shot. 'Tis a thousand pities.'

'There be nothing happens but what be good for trade,' observed Farmer Facey.

'You're right there, maister!' answered Daniel. 'There's not a sparrer falls, nor an oss breaks his knees, nor gets spavined, but what it be good for them as is vetinaries, or has osses to sell. And it be the same wi' 'uman beings ; them goes scatt at times, and it be for the good o' the doctors. So the Lord sends to every man his meat.'

'But how did it come about?' This was a question asked of Joyce repeatedly. But Joyce

was uncommunicative. She kept her eyes fixed on the face of the injured man, and only now and then turned them with a sharp, defiant glance at any one who approached too near.

The hostess kindly brought her a hunch of bread. She tore and ate it much as an animal devours its food. She returned no thanks for it. She could think of nothing but him whom she held to her bosom, watching every change in his face, or fearing lest he should die in her arms.

The journey was long, but Joyce did not relax her hold nor relinquish her place for one moment.

'Won't'y get down and hev a drop o' cyder?' asked the driver, at every public house they passed. 'It be a faint day for the horses, and they need refreshing.'

Joyce shook her head in reply. But if Joyce would not assist in cooling the horses by drinking herself, the driver was more considerate.

Between each of these refreshment stations, the man endeavoured to open conversation with her. He was a young fellow, fresh in colour, and not bad looking. He had a sufficiently observant eye to see that Joyce was a fine girl, though a very rough

one. But she would not answer him ; she did not even look at him, unless he ventured too near her charge.

She was patient at the stoppages, which were many. They rested Herring. She saw in his face that he suffered with the motion and was easy when the motion ceased. That sufficed her.

In the midst of Sourton Down stands a very humble tavern, backed by a few stunted trees, twisted and turning from the west ; and by the roadside is to be seen a tall granite cross, once a burial monument of a British chief, and bearing an inscription that was cut into and rendered illegible in mediæval times, when the upright stone was converted into a wayside cross.

As the waggon halted before this little tavern, Joyce saw Herring's eyes open. He raised his arms and waved them in an unmeaning manner; then, looking intently upwards, as though he saw something far above him in the depths of the blue sky, he drew a deep sigh and murmured 'Mirelle!'

Then his eyes closed again, and his hands dropped.

'Right, right, maister!' said Joyce ; 'it be the Whiteface you want and would seek. But why do'y look up there ? Her be on

earth, not in heaven. I be a nursing of'y, none for Joyce, nor for Miss Cicely, but for her you cries after and looks for up above.'

At Okehampton they met with no interruption, and were surrounded by no throng of inquisitive persons, and the reason was this. The parson of a neighbouring moorland parish had been summoned that day before the magistrates, on a charge of maltreating and starving a poor boy in his house, his wife's son by a former husband. The magistrates dismissed him with a reprimand and a caution; but the people were not disposed to treat the matter so lightly and the man so leniently. All the fluid portion of the populace had flowed out on the moor road after the retiring parson, with hoots, and clots of earth, and expressions of aversion. The rabble manifested an intimate acquaintance with his domestic arrangements, and taunted him with them. If the reverend gentleman could have commanded his temper, he might have speedily tired out his pursuers; but this he was unable to do, and unwise enough not to attempt. He was a remarkably ugly man, ill-made, short in leg and long in arm, with large hands and feet, and a face with low brow and protruding jaws. He became mad with rage and humiliation, and turned

savagely, whenever the crowd ventured near his heels, to charge them with his green gingham umbrella, and smite them furiously, uttering unclerical exclamations of abuse and contempt. His face was simian in its ugliness and malignity. The whalebones of his umbrella were dislocated, and the wires protruded. One boy was cut with the iron, and when this was perceived there rose a howl of indignation, and a moorstone whizzed through the air and knocked the parson's hat off his head. He was a poor man, and the injury done to his best hat and to his umbrella was more than he could endure. He ran as fast as his short legs could fly over the ground, and took refuge in a cottage, the door of which he barred ; and then, escaping up the rude stair, he spat at his pursuers from the window.

Parson-baiting is not an every-day treat, and the luxury had emptied the streets of Okehampton. Consequently the waggon passed through almost unnoticed.

As the waggon crossed the bridge over the Taw, it encountered the two chaises with the party of serious speculators returning from Ophir. They had slept at Zeal. Mr. Flamank, as a director of the mine, had felt it incumbent on him to make a complete inve sti-

gation into the method of working, and into the accounts. The men engaged on the mine had been examined by him, and he had overhauled the books in the office. Among these he had discovered a private book of the Tramplaras, which contained a register of the amount of gold expended in the salting, and the amount recovered after the washing. Those serious men whom the Reverend Israel had taken with him, in the hopes of inducing them to sink capital in Ophir, assisted him zealously in the detection of the imposture.

The transaction was humiliating to the little man, but he was a thoroughly conscientious person, and he did not shrink from that which he felt it was at once his duty and his interest to do, however galling it might be to his self-esteem. He carried away the books with him, and dismissed the workmen, warning them that they would be required to give evidence in the trial of the Tramplaras, which, as he supposed, would inevitably follow.

'I have been considering,' said Israel Flamank to those with him in the same carriage, 'that I have been very blind. Last night I was unable to sleep, and so I turned prophecy over in my head, and I saw clearly, at last, that the whole affair had been foretold. The name Trampleasure, if rightly estimated—

that is, with a certain value given to each letter, and the capital letter *T* being reckoned as double a small *t*, and the *e a* in pleasure being turned into an *i*, Tramplisure instead of Trampleasure, which is the way in which some persons would pronounce the name, and the *e* at the end of the name omitted as a mute—I say, thus valued, the name makes, when summed up, exactly six hundred and sixty-six, which is the number of the Beast, and which is also, we are distinctly told, the number of a man's name. Now this, I take it, is a very significant fact. The Beast, we are further informed, would deceive the very elect; and what else are we, I ask, but the very elect?'

'That is true,' responded all those in the chaise, and shook their heads affirmatively.

'And he spake great swelling words,' went on the Reverend Israel. 'Now old Mr. Trampleasure had a certain pomposity of manner about him that exactly tallies with the description given by the inspired penman.'

'Very true,' answered the carriage-load, and the heads all shook together again.

'It is remarkable also,' continued the minister, 'that in the sacred text the Beast Trampleasure is associated with the Woman, Babylon—that is, with Rome. For Babylon

is Rome, as every schoolboy knows, ethnographically, entomologically, and enterically. Now, I ask you, is not a young Roman Catholic lady staying in Dolbeare with the family, and is not Miss Trampleasure about to be, or already, married to a Roman Catholic gentleman?'

'To be sure,' responded those in the chaise, and shook their heads knowingly.

'And, remember, the seer of Patmos saw two Beasts, and the little one derived his power from the elder, which was wounded, though not to death. That wound I take to be the failure of Polpluggan, from which old Trampleasure recovered. As to the little Beast, there can be no question about him—Sampson Trampleasure, junior.'

'That is certain!' exclaimed the chorus, and all the heads shook to the left.

'But, good heavens, what have we here!' cried Mr. Flamank.

The carriage stopped.

'What's the matter there?' inquired the driver of the chaise, as he drew up.

'Why, bless me!' said the minister, starting to his feet. 'As sure as I am alive that is Mr. John Herring. Stay, young man,' he called to the waggoner. 'How comes the gentleman in such a plight? Girl,' to Joyce,

'where did you find him? Is he alive? Is he badly hurt? How came this about?'

The little man jumped out of the carriage in a fever of excitement, and pity, and alarm. Joyce gave him no information, but he picked up something from the boy who drove, and learned that, in some way or other, Sampson Tramplara was involved.

'Bless my soul!' exclaimed Mr. Flamank. 'One cannot be too thankful for mercies. Actually John Herring made me—me run after this cut-throat murderer—and yet I remain unhurt; whereas John Herring, who takes up the chase, is killed. A really startling interposition of Providence.'

'He be not dead,' said Joyce, fiercely; 'I shan't let 'n die, I shan't.'

Then the waggon moved on.

'Where be West Wyke to?' asked the driver.

'I'll tell'y where to stop,' answered Joyce. 'Go right on till I shout Wo!'

She allowed him to proceed past the turning over the turf leading to West Wyke, and then she suddenly gave the signal to halt.

'The road over the moor be too bad to travel wi' wheels,' said Joyce. 'You bide here, and I will fetch vaither, and he'll carry the maister home, along of I.'

Joyce was not long gone before she returned with old Cobbledick, carrying a hurdle. With the carter's help, Herring was lifted on to it; and then Joyce and her father departed over the moor, without another word to the man, conveying Herring between them.

'They be rum folk in these parts,' said Jim White, the waggoner, 'not to offer a fellow a glass of cyder, and the hosses all of a lather with the journey.'

CHAPTER XXXII.

DESTITUTE.

Mr. Trampleasure's death, through the bursting of a blood-vessel on the brain, and the escape of Sampson, left the three women at Dolbeare without a head. Captain Trecarrel did not appear, except to make a formal call of condolence, or to offer his services in a manner that implied that this offer was not to be accepted.

'Lucky dog that I am,' said he to himself; 'saved at the last moment in a manner melodramatic. There is a sweet little cherub that sits up aloft, and takes care of the fate of Trecarrel. By George! suppose I had been noosed and turned off before this terrible scandal came out, what should I have done? Now there lies before me one clear course of action. There is an opera company at this time performing in Exeter, and I am fond of music. I must positively go to the faithful city[1]

[1] The motto of Exeter is 'Semper fidelis.'

by the next coach, and not return till the clouds have cleared somewhat. But before I go, there is one duty I must perform. I must let the directors of Ophir know of old Trampleasure's five thousand pounds lodged in the hands of John Herring.'

It is needless to say that the marriage had not taken place. It is needless also to say that Trecarrel did depart to Exeter to hear the opera company. It is also needless to say that he thoroughly enjoyed himself, liked the music, caught some of the airs, ate, drank, and smoked, and blessed his stars every day that he was a free man. He not only blessed his luck, but he flattered himself that he had extricated himself by his own shrewdness. 'And now,' said he, 'here am I in Exeter, enjoying myself. Had I remained at Trecarrel, I must have gone to bed, and one may have too much even of a good thing.'

The affairs of the Ophir Gold Company were wound up. All the directors met, except Arundell Golitho, of Trevorgan, Esquire, who did not appear. But that was hardly wonderful, as no one knew who Arundell Golitho, Esq. was, and as the letter addressed to him, stating the circumstances of the company, the death of Mr. Trampleasure, and the disappearance of Mr. Sampson with the funds of

the company, was returned unopened. The post-office was unable to discover Trevorgan. When the affairs were wound up, it was discovered that there were liabilities, but no assets except the five thousand pounds held by Mr. Herring. The shareholders had lost everything they had embarked in the concern, except what little would come to them out of the five thousand pounds after the liabilities had been discharged, and the lawyers had sweated the little sum to a cipher.

Then it was that the Reverend Israel Flamank's character shone out. The man's vanity had received a crushing blow, he would never entirely recover from the ridicule that descended on him for his discovery of Ophir. He had lost his small capital sunk in the mine. He alone, however, had thought and compassion at this juncture for the orphan and the widow. He found that Orange and her mother were left absolutely destitute. The five thousand pounds known to be in Herring's hands would be absorbed and dissipated, and the furniture of Dolbeare sold. There was nothing, absolutely nothing, left, on which Mrs. Trampleasure and her daughter and Mirelle could live; for old Trampleasure had thrown Mirelle's money into the same venture, and it was gone past recovery.

Mr. Flamank exerted his powers of persuasion on the directors to induce them to propose to the shareholders a surrender of a small portion of the money that they were able to lay their hands on, for the maintenance of the widow and her daughter. But none are so remorseless as pious persons touched in pocket. He pleaded to deaf ears. The liabilities of the mine were considerable, and would eat into the little fund. The men's wages were in arrear. The builders had received only a trifle on account for the sheds they had erected. The company owed for the water-wheel, for the drum, for the stamping-mill, for the cradles, the buddles, and the whips and the whims. Nothing, in short, had been paid for. As for the receipts, they were nil, for nothing had been got out of Ophir but what had been put in. Old Tramplara, it was supposed, had sunk his own money in the concern, at least it appeared so ; for he had drawn everything out of the bank, had sold all his investments except the Patagonians which were unsaleable. The gold employed in salting the mine had undoubtedly consumed a great deal, and what remained had gone, with the shareholders' money, into the pocket of Mr. Sampson. It was fortunate that only the first call had been made on the shareholders, and that few of the

shares were fully paid up. Nevertheless the loss was considerable, so considerable as to sour the sincerest Christian among them, and make them indifferent to the woes of the arch scoundrel's widow and daughter.

When Mr. Flamank found that nothing was to be saved out of the wreck for the Trampleasures, he went about collecting contributions for them. But his credit was suffering eclipse, and exasperation against Tramplara too great for him to do much. He was unable to get together more than fifty pounds, given grudgingly, and not obtained without great personal effort and the endurance of many humiliations.

The five thousand pounds lodged with John Herring lay in the bank in his name. It was the only sum standing to his account. But when Herring was written to, no answer was returned. That was not greatly wondered at, for it was known that he had been found insensible on the road, and had been carried in the same condition to West Wyke.

The directors wrote him to the effect that the affairs of Mr. Trampleasure, deceased, were so involved in those of the Ophir Mining Company that it was necessary to settle both together. Mr. Trampleasure had died insolvent. His chief creditors were the directors

of the company, and the administration of his effects had been granted to them. They were, therefore, empowered to call in all moneys due to the deceased, and, as such, they claimed the five thousand pounds which were to be repaid to Mr. Trampleasure in the event of the marriage of his daughter with Captain Trecarrel not taking place on a certain day. That marriage had not been solemnized at the time specified, nor was it probable that it would be within a reasonable period, therefore the money was due to them as a debt to the late Mr. Trampleasure.

The cheque did reach them after a time, written with a shaking hand, and the money was drawn. Herring could not have refused it. With the cheque came a letter offering to purchase the entire plant of Ophir, wheel, and stampers, and crushers, everything in fact, at a moderate valuation. The offer was too good to be refused. The directors closed with it by return of post. There was, consequently, no sale by auction at Ophir, but everything in Dolbeare was condemned to go by the hammer, except the personal effects of Mrs. and Miss Trampleasure, and of Mirelle. The house was to be cleared of everything, except the clock on the stairs, the crayon portraits, and the walking-sticks. The ladies could not

remain for the auction. They would have had no home to go to, had not the Reverend Israel Flamank intervened and opened his doors to them. He did this in a gush of benevolence, and, unhappily, without first consulting Mrs. Flamank, who, when told what he had done, went into 'tantrums,' and made the house so unpleasant for the Reverend Israel that he spent the rest of the day in making pastoral calls and eating pastoral meals with his sheep.

By evening Mrs. Flamank became calmer, and, when her husband returned late, was so far subdued that she yielded a reluctant consent to giving the Trampleasures shelter for a month.

'You know, Betsy Delilah, dear saint,' said Israel, 'if we do not take them in, the poor creatures will be turned into the street, and that your tender heart would be unable to bear, sweet angel!'

'I'm sure, Izzy, we have lost enough by the Trampleasures already. However, I will not say nay, because it will look well, and people will say we practise what we preach. Only—I warn you, Izzy!' she held up her finger; 'mind yourself.'

What Mrs. Betsy Delilah meant by this warning, he understood perfectly. With his

many excellent qualities, Mr. Flamank had a weakness : he was given to caress his female devotees.

In the Established Church there are two schools differing in their tendencies. The tendency of the extreme of the High Church is towards plunging into pecuniary difficulties ; the tendency of the extreme of the Low Church is towards lapses into amatory difficulties. If this be the case in the Established Church—if this be done in the green tree, what goes on in the dry ?—in the nonconformist churches, where the ministers are not independent of their congregations—where the mercury of their salary rises and falls with their popularity. It is natural that in such circumstances there should be developed a tendency towards fawning on and fondling of pious ladies with money. A little coaxing retains a sheep that inclines to err into another fold. The pressing of the hand changes a shilling subscription into a guinea, and an arm round the waist elevates it to five pounds. When the habit has been acquired of showing these tendernesses to the well-to-do, old and ugly ladies, it sometimes extends also to those who are good-looking and young, and becomes at last wholly indiscriminate.

Now the Reverend Israel Flamank was a

sincere and good man, and he drew the line, with singular moderation, at kisses. These were scriptural—the Apostle Paul had a fancy for them, and recommended them wholesale. But the arm round the waist he did not allow. He found no warranty for it in Holy Writ. But he would take a lady's hand in one of his, and stroke it with the other, and read and expound to her the Song of Solomon. There was no harm in that; and it was really remarkable how these innocent attentions told on his income and his acceptableness to his congregation.

Mrs. Flamank did not like these familiarities. Though she knew they were as harmless as the love-making of actors and actresses on the stage, and were inseparable from the position of a minister in an Unestablished Church, she objected to them. She was very determined, if she received Mrs. Trampleasure, Orange, and Mirelle into her house, she would permit none of these Pauline caressings under her eyes. But it is easier for a resolution to be taken than to enforce it. Mr. Flamank was very discreet for a week or ten days, but after that he began to soften towards the ladies. Mirelle kept him at a distance from the outset. He had been highly pleased at the prospect of getting a daughter

of the Scarlet Woman into his house. He looked on her as an erring sheep, one who erred through ignorance ; and he hoped to enlighten her, and lead her into the paths of truth. He was, however, somewhat puzzled how to set about it. Mirelle withdrew from family devotion, and declined to assist at his scriptural readings. She would not attend his chapel. She allowed him no opportunity of opening a conversation with her on religious topics. She was cold, reserved, and silent. Mrs. Flamank rather liked her : there was no fear of Israel patting her hand.

The pastor attempted to dazzle her with his evangelical talk, much in the same way that young Sampson had attempted to impress her with his brag of feats performed with dogs and horses. On one or two occasions he had the temerity to attack her, but he came off with falls which damped his ardour. Once, when he assailed her on the subject of belief, she cut him short with the observation, 'We do not speak the same language. When I say, I believe, I mean that I hold as certain, but I notice that you use the word differently, as synonymous with I suppose. We look at different objects and through different instruments ; I through a

telescope at constant verities, you through a kaleidoscope at vari-coloured and ever-varying opinions.'

With Orange it was not the same. She was in trouble. Mortified pride and wounded love brought frequent tears into her eyes. She looked very handsome in her mourning suit. What is the first duty of a pastor, but to comfort the sorrowful, to soothe the ruffled soul, to apply the balm of Gilead to open wounds ? So Mr. Israel Flamank was assiduous in his comforting and soothing, and dabbing on of balm,—more assiduous than Betsy Delilah liked. Orange was coarse of grit, and did not object to the little attentions of the pastor which would have been insufferable to Mirelle. She accepted them with indifference ; she was without religious instincts, and the words of the shepherd fell empty on her ear. But there was something flattering in his efforts to console her, and at the present time, when her pride was hurt, any flattery was pleasing. Captain Trecarrel was not there to staunch her tears, to cheer her and give her assurance of a future ; any one who could afford her some alleviation to her humiliation, and encourage her with a hope of better things, was acceptable, even though he were a dissenting minister.

Flamank was perfectly sincere. His heart was full of kindness and devoid of guile. He was troubled at her distress, and unhappy at his inability to help her. It was unfortunate that his mode of expressing these justifiable feelings did not meet with the approval of Betsy Delilah. They irritated her, and she determined to shake herself free of her guests at the first opportunity.

Captain Trecarrel had returned to the neighbourhood. Orange heard of it, and waited several days in expectation of a visit. But he neither called nor sent to inquire after her and her mother. She brooded over this neglect. Did he really mean to desert her ? He could not behave so cruelly, so unworthily. Her hot blood raced through her veins. She resolved that she would go herself to Trecarrel. She would go alone ; no one should know of the visit. She would speak to Harry face to face. When he had her before him, and saw her in her black, her face—her beautiful face, wet with tears, his love would blaze up, his manly pity and generosity would force him to assert his right to protect her.

He was staying away only because of the scandal about Ophir. He was waiting for that to blow away, and then he would return to her. She felt sure of that; she measured

his love by her own. Would she have forsaken him had ruin overtaken him? A thousand times no—no—no! She must know his intentions for certain. Her future depended on knowing this. She was unable to endure the thought that she should be seen going to seek him, and therefore she resolved to go by herself after dark. She would not tell Mrs. or Mr. Flamank, nor her mother, nor, of course, Mirelle. The thing could be done with ease. The drawing-room had French windows, through which the little garden could be entered. The drawing-room was rarely sat in; it was used for company occasions. The family occupied the dining-room, in which they had their meals, and in which they worked and talked afterwards, amidst the fumes of meat, cabbage, and cheese. This was economical; it saved carpets and furniture, and an extra fire.

Orange waited till all had gone to bed. They were early risers, and retired early in that house. Then she softly descended the stairs, her shoes in her hand, and entered the drawing-room. She easily unclosed the shutters, without making any noise, unlocked and unbolted the French window, opened it, put on her shoes, and stepped forth on the gravel.

The street was deserted ; only a low tavern at the end had the door open, and a light shone forth into the road. In that gleam, a young woman, adorned with gay ribands, was laughing and romping with two nearly tipsy young men. The language, the gestures, were gross and disgusting.

'Have another nip of gin, Polly.'

'No, you shan't have none of his, Polly, I'll give you some, my duck. You be my sweetheart, and not his.'

'Who goes there ?' screamed the girl, and made a rush at Orange. 'Here's a girl for you, Tom, and then you let me alone with Joe.'

Orange flung her off with scorn, and ran along the road. A burst of laughter and jeers followed her.

'She be going after her young man down to the lane end,' cried the girl.

Orange's cheek burned. That was true —hatefully true. She was going to seek her lover, but only because he did not come to see her. After this incident she was unmolested. She met no one else on her long walk to Trecarrel.

Would she find the Captain up ? She hoped so, she supposed so, for she knew that he sat up late ; he had often told her as

much. It was as she had conjectured and hoped. When she reached the house, she saw a light from his smoking-room, a comfortable room, where he kept his whips and guns ; a room ornamented with stuffed foxes' heads and their tails, and with the antlers of red deer. A door from this little room opened on to the lawn. Orange went to the window, but the blind was down and she could not see in ; but she heard Trecarrel within whistling an air ; it was an operatic air he had recently heard in Exeter, and which had caught his fancy. How splendidly La Fontana had sung! What schooling her voice had gone through, and what quality was in it ! How graceful she was, and what passionate action she showed. 'You never get that sort of a thing out of an Englishwoman,' he mused. 'Our countrywomen cannot act ; they have no fire, no passion, they are dolls, and move mechanically. Their voices, moreover——' Good heavens! Who is that?'

He started up. The door opened, and Orange came in. He had been seated over his fire, with his cravat off, a bottle of claret and a glass on the table at his side ; he had just finished a pipe.

'No fire, no passion in an English girl!'

There were both before him, flaming in Orange's eye, and heaving in her bosom.

'Bless my soul, Orange, what on earth has brought you here ?'

'You, Harry, you!' She was out of breath, and choking with emotion. 'Oh, Harry, dear Harry, why have you not been to see me ?'

'Come over to the fire. You must be cold.'

'I—I, cold!' she laughed bitterly. 'I am burning ; feel my hand. I have run ; but it is not that. The flame is here.' She touched her heart. 'It is eating its way, it is consuming me. Oh, Harry, why have you not been to see me? You do not know what I have suffered.'

'We have both suffered,' he answered ; but there was not much token of pain in his blue eyes, nor tone in his voice. 'Come over here ; I am sure you must be damp with the night air. This is most indiscreet of you, Orange ; I hope you have come attended.'

'I am alone.'

'You ought not to have come. It is wrong—it is indelicate.' He was fitting on his cravat as he spoke. 'Good heavens what would be said had you been seen ?'

'No one has seen me; no one knows where I am.'

'This is madness,' he said. He twirled his moustache; he was greatly discomposed. 'I wish you had been more reasonable, Orange.' Then to himself, 'I wish I had remained in Exeter, or gone to bed.'

'I dare say it is madness and unreasonable,' she said; 'I am mad. Do you know, Harry, all that has happened? Do you know that my mother and I are beggars? We have nothing left to us.'

'My good Orange, I have been myself on the verge of that same condition all my life, and so can sympathise with you.'

'You have a house of your own, we have none. You have land that no man can take from you, and you can at least dig that and live on its produce. But my mother and I have nothing; no house, no land, no money. We eat the bread of charity, and how long is it to last? Harry, I ask you?'

He was silent, engaged on his cravat. It offended his delicacy to be seen and to converse with a lady without his cravat.

'You do not answer me, Harry; you are not going to desert me now I am down. If you had been poor and an outcast, would

not I have taken you, though I were wealthy?'

'But there is the rub,' said the Captain, interrupting her. 'If I were rich I would share it with you and welcome, but I am not rich; I am miserably poor, hardly able to keep my head out of a debtor's prison.'

'Harry, I do not mind that. You are bound to me; you cannot desert me in my misery. No, I know you too well. You are too good, too noble, too true a gentleman. I cannot, I will not believe it. Take me as I am. We can but be poor together, and I will work as your slave. With love labour is light, and poverty is made rich.'

'That is rather a pretty sentiment, Orange, but it is impracticable.'

'It is not impracticable. Try me.'

'That is absurd. I cannot try you, and, if the experiment fails, dissolve the partnership.'

She was silent, and looked him full in the face. Then her feelings overcame her. She stretched out her arms to him. 'Harry,' she gasped, 'Harry, I love you!'

He did not put out his arms to encircle her, to take her to his heart; but he put his hand to his pipe and began to scrape out the

ashes with a bit of stick—a toothpick that was on the mantelpiece.

'Be reasonable, Orange; it is impossible for us to marry now. There is this terrible scandal about Ophir barring it for one thing; there is my poverty for another. We must wait.'

'I knew it,' she said, relieved; 'I knew the delay was for a time only. But, Harry, in the meanwhile I have no home. Where am I to live? What roof is to cover me from the rain and the snow? Where am I to get food to put in my mouth, whence the clothes to cover me? Whilst you are waiting for Ophir to be forgotten, I am starving.'

'This calls for consideration,' he said, still cleaning his pipe; and now he blew through it, to assure himself that the passage was clear.

'Harry, you have an aunt at Penzance, take me to her. I will live with her a few years, till this trouble about Ophir is passed, and then you shall marry me from her house.'

'That is not possible, Orange. My aunt strongly disapproved of my engagement. She is a most bigoted Catholic, and could not endure the thought of my taking a Protestant to wife.'

'I will be a Catholic ; I do not care.'

'But,' said he, coldly, 'that is not all. Our families are so wide apart in the social scale. My aunt is very proud of her race, and you know your stock is not—well, neither ancient nor gentle. You may change your creed, but not your blood. I think nothing of this. If I had considered it, I would not have sought to marry you, but my aunt—you see we are speaking of her, and you propose that I should take you to her—my aunt is very stiff in these matters. I cannot force you into her house. So you see this scheme is impracticable also.'

'Where am I to go?' asked Orange, desperately ; 'I must live somewhere. You are my proper protector, to whom I fly. I ask you, find me, give me a home. See, Harry, I am poor now, but it may not always be so. The directors of Ophir have left us some thousands of pounds in Patagonian bonds.'

'Oh! I know them. They were left because worthless.'

'They are worthless now, but they may become valuable hereafter. Let us wait till then ; I will be patient, and in time you will marry me.'

'Oh, certainly, when the Patagonians are at par.'

'But in the meantime, Harry, what is to become of me?'

'Really, I am at a loss to know. I am at my wits' end what to propose.'

Then her cheek and brow became crimson.

'Harry! I am sunk so low that I care not what the world says, and what becomes of me. I will stay here; you shall not send me away. I have no pride left. Let me be a poor serving maid, a kitchen-wench in the house, and work for you. If the world talks, let it—I defy it.'

Trecarrel sprang back. This was indeed madness. She must be cured.

'Orange!' he said, 'I am too honourable to listen to such words with composure. Go back whence you came. Here! I will accompany you. You must not be alone.'

'No, I came alone, and I can go alone. But—what is to become of me?'

'You think only of yourself, Orange; you are selfish. Poor Mirelle! how she must suffer also. What is to become of that sweet and fragile flower?'

Orange looked him full in the eyes. A light flickered and flashed in hers, a terrible light. She stood as a statue before him for

a moment. Fierce thoughts, wild, dark, like smoke from the bottomless pit, rose, and rolled over and obscured her brain.

'Poor Mirelle! Sweet and fragile flower!' At that moment, with her, Orange, pleading before him, with her in an agony and in abasement before him, he could think of Mirelle, and throw Mirelle in her teeth.

Then she turned to the door. All hope was gone.

'Let me attend you home,' he said.

'I have no home,' she answered hoarsely.

'Let me go with you to where you are lodging.'

'I came alone, I will return alone,' she said, and left the room.

She hurried into the road. When there, however, she stood and waited. Would he come after her? She waited on; the light in his smoking-room disappeared, it reappeared at another window, and travelled upwards, then shone out of an upstair room. Captain Trecarrel was going to bed.

Then Orange ran back to Launceston.

As she passed the low public-house, she stumbled over something. It was the young woman, drunk, lying in the road. She reached the house of the Flamanks, and thrust open the drawing-room window and went in.

'Hah!' exclaimed Mrs. Flamank, standing there, with Mrs. Trampleasure trembling and sniffiing behind her; 'this is fine goings on in my house. Out to one o'clock in the morning, cutting about, heaven knows where, and with whom. This is a Christian habitation. Out of my house you go to-morrow.'

'Betsy Delilah!' remonstrated Mr. Flamank from the door, 'the poor souls have no house to go to.'

'She,' exclaimed Mrs. Flamank, indicating Orange—'she don't want one. She likes the street at night, apparently.'

'Madam,' said Mirelle, stepping forward, and speaking with composure, 'give us but two days' shelter, and then we will trouble you no more, I undertake. I have a friend to whom I will appeal.'

Then she went upstairs, and wrote :—

'Mr. Herring!—Come to us. Help us! —MIRELLE.'

CHAPTER XXXIII.

TRANSFORMATION.

Grizzly Cobbledick and Joyce carried John Herring to the Giant's Table. Joyce had not the smallest intention of surrendering her charge to Cicely. She had feared lest the farmer should accompany the waggon, and insist on the injured man being conveyed to West Wyke House. Fortunately, the chance of making a bargain with the Squire had arrested him at Bridestowe, and the young lout who acted as driver was easily managed.

Grizzly consented to receive Herring into his den, not because he felt gratitude to him for having saved him from imprisonment, and for having cured Joyce of her injuries, but because he thought that 'backie' might be extracted from him.

Gratitude is not a savage virtue; but then, is gratitude to be found anywhere? It is a figment of the poet and moralist, like

the unicorn and the mermaid. A simulation of this ideal virtue is assumed by those who are cultured, but the genuine plant grows on no human soil and under no known climate.

Grizzly bore Herring no ill-will, and he thought it possible that the tobacco which was lost to him through the insolvency of Tramplara might be made up to him by the indebtedness of Herring. He would see to that ; he would hold Herring in captivity till as much 'backie' was produced as could be counted on the toes and fingers, with the head thrown in. If he died, he died. Speculations succeed or fail ; there are blanks and prizes in the lottery, disappointments and luck in life.

'Cut off,' said Grizzly to his daughter, 'and go and wire a rabbit. The young maister, if he comes round, will want some'ut to eat, sure.'

'But what if he wakes up whilst I be gone?'

'Then he wakes—that be all.'

'You'll be good and kind to 'n, vaither,' entreated Joyce.

'Why not? He ain't done me no hurt,' answered Grizzly.

It took a little persuading and threatening on Grizzly's part before Joyce could be in-

duced to relinquish her place. She would not have gone, but have sat on in unreasoning jealousy and fear of losing Herring, unless her father had insisted on her giving him proper food.

'What'll the likes o' he say to turnips, eh? He ain't one to eat mun. The quality eat nort but meat. You may give a horse the best beef-steak, and you may set before a man the choicest hay, and neither will begin to bite. You must give mun what them likes, not what you think best. So wi' the maister; he be quality, and, when you offers 'n your turnip and cabbidge, that be there a biling over the turves, he'll turn his head away. It be all the same to he as giving 'n hay or a horse beef. You must give to ivery creeter its proper food.'

When Joyce was gone, old Cobbledick surveyed Herring carefully and examined his bones. No bones were broken. His head was suffering from concussion, not from fracture. The old fellow had wit enough to ascertain this. Then he proceeded to partly undress him. It was not the custom of the Cobbledick tribe to unclothe themselves when they retired to rest; but then they were hardly clothed when about by day. If Cobbledick now stripped Herring it was not in the interest

of the patient, but in his own. Having removed a portion of the garments of the still unconscious man, he proceeded to vest himself in them. Inexperience made him put on the clothes clumsily, and neither in their traditional order nor in their proper manner. Still, the general effect was one of transformation. He tried on Herring's boots, but was unable to compress his great flat feet into them; so he flung them aside; but he laboriously removed the spurs, and buckled them on his own heels. The stockings he left on Herring's legs; he knew he would be unable to wear them. His own limbs, from the knees downwards, were swathed in hay-bands. He assumed the waistcoat, but not the shirt, and was careful to set the watch in the pocket—the wrong pocket, of course—and let the seals dangle from the fob. The waistcoat was open, and his brown, dirty skin showed dark against the nankin. The coat was rather tight, high-collared, with a roll; Cobbledick was mightily pleased with it. He jumped and swung the tails from side to side, and ran after them, round and round, like a kitten pursuing its own tail. He sallied forth to a pond and contemplated himself in it. The effect was not perfect. He went back and deprived Herring of his cravat, which till now he had left about his

neck. This he wrapped about his own throat, making it very stiff, and holding his chin high in the air. Herring's hat was there; it had not been left in the road; Farmer Facey had picked it up and tossed it into the waggon as it departed. Cobbledick put the beaver on, somewhat on one side, as he had seen Sampson Tramplara cock his hat when tipsy; and he took up the hunting-whip Joyce had brought with her, and, so accoutred, he lounged in the door of his den. But Grizzly was not satisfied with himself. His hay-swathings were not in character. He proceeded to divest himself of these. Then his bare legs looked incongruous with the remainder of his equipment. Now Herring had worn cloth gaiters over his stockings. Grizzly had unbuttoned these with much difficulty. Indeed, it can hardly be said that he had unbuttoned them; he had rather torn them off, sending the buttons flying. To button them on his own calves was a feat beyond his powers. His fingers were incapable of performing such work as passing a button through a hole. He tried, and abandoned the attempt in despair.

He flung his own rags over Herring, and went forth to examine himself again in the pool. The brown shins and calves did not please him. He sat down and thought.

Then he remembered that the masons engaged at Ophir had been mixing lime for whitewashing. What if he stole down there and whitewashed his legs! That would complete his transformation. The old man was as conceited as a young buck newly accoutred by a fashionable tailor.

So Cobbledick started for the mine, walking with difficulty. The constraint of the garments encasing his nether limbs was to him as great as that caused by Saul's armour to David. David, finding he could not go in this, put it off him. Grizzly was less wise; he waddled on in suffering and constraint, and was caught and thrown occasionally by the spurs that dangled at his bare heels. The gorse scratched his shins, usually protected by hay-bands; but he heeded not these inconveniences. With his head in the air, one arm akimbo, and the hand holding the riding-whip resting on his hip, he strutted on, wishing, and yet fearing to be seen—desirous of admiration, and yet shy of the reception he might meet with from those accustomed to see him half-naked.

He mounted a flat slab of granite, and, taking off his hat, bowed and waved it, as he had seen old Tramplara salute distinguished and wealthy visitors to Ophir. Imitation is

strong in the savage and in the idiot. By the help of this faculty the social world gets on without jars, for there are savages and idiots in all ranks of life, and the deeper their savagery and their idiocy the more pronounced is the development of their imitative powers. They copy the manners of those around them, simulate their breeding and virtues, and so disguise their nature and pass muster. Social education consists in the training of neophytes what to copy and what to disregard in the bearing and manners of those with whom they associate. But such as are left without instructors pick up and imitate all that they ought to avoid, and overlook what they should copy. Thus it is that servant maids reproduce in themselves the pretences and follies of their mistresses, and not their thrift and good sense; and the butler apes his master's vices and eschews his virtues.

Left alone in the den, lying on the fern, with the smoke of the peat fire and the reek of stewing vegetables filling it, Herring opened his eyes and looked about him.

It was some time before he recognised where he was, and then he was unable to account for his being there. The evening was stealing on, the sun was setting ; there was a glow of golden light outside the door, and a

streak of yellow glory came from a notch in the stone at the back of the table, unfilled with moss. Herring's head was painful, and all his limbs ached. He could scarce move his arms ; they were sprained and bruised. He tried to stand up, but the effort gave him torture, and he was forced to lie down again. He was, however, satisfied that he was sound in limb, though sprained and bruised. He could close his hands and move his feet. Then he thought of the events that had recently taken place. He could follow the thread to one point—after that it was broken off. He had borrowed a horse at Bridestowe, he had ridden hard in pursuit of Sampson Tramplara—and then ensued darkness and a blank.

Had Sampson shot him ? He tore open his shirt and felt ; there was no wound. He felt his head ; it was not bandaged.

How came he in the den of the Cobbledicks ? As he was puzzling over this question, the entrance was darkened, and Joyce entered, carrying a fowl by the legs. The moment she saw that he was conscious, she uttered a cry of joy, and was at his side, on her knees, grasping his hands, with tears and flashes of delight in her eyes.

'Oh, maister ! the dear maister ! you be

alive and not going to sleep away dead! You can see who be here—your own poor Joyce. Right glad I be to see the life in your eyes and the blood in your cheeks again. Oh, glory rallaluley! I be joyful! I could sing my heart up over my lips, and away through this great covering stone.'

'Joyce!' said Herring, 'I do not understand. What is the meaning of this? How came I here?'

'Sure, my maister, it were I as brought you here. The young Cap'n Sampson Tramplara would ha' killed'y, but I fought 'n for'y, and I were too much for 'n. You mended my arms and made them strong, and they were strong enough to keep 'n off from killing of you. He'd ha' done it. He had that in his hand would ha' scatted your head all to smash, and he were about to do it, but I were too strong for he, thanks be to you for mending of me up. Glory rallaluley!'

'But how came I here, Joyce?'

'Sure enough, because I brought'y in a waggon as grand as a king. Sure,' she said, laughing and crying in one breath, 'I never went on nothing but my own bare feet afore, and but for the grandness, I'd rather walk any day. But I could not ha' carried you thus far. That were why I were forced to hire a waggon.

Not but as though I wouldn't ha' done it. I'd ha' carried you the world over in my airms, if I could, and never let you drop till I died. But—Loramussy ! what have become of your clothes ? By the blue blazes! this be vaither's doing.'

'Joyce, how did this take place? I cannot understand.'

'The horse were throwed and you with him. Cap'n Sampson had put a gate across the road ; and you rode quite innocent like right on to it. After you were down, he came out from behind the hedge, and would ha' killed you, but your own poor Joyce were there, and her fought 'n, and her tore at 'n. He might ha' cut her flesh off her bones, and scat her bones, but her'd not hev let 'n hurt you no more.'

Then she seized his hands in a paroxysm of joy and covered them with kisses, and pressed them to her beating heart. 'It were I, your own Joyce, as saved'y.'

See what self-respect will do—how it lifts out of the slough ! Once Joyce had licked his hand like a dog. Now she had learned her own worth, she had battled for and saved his dear life ; and her pride had heaved her from the low estate of bestiality to the level of a human being. She kissed his hand, she no

longer licked it. That marked a distinct stride in civilisation.

'But,' she added, as she knelt over him, still holding his hand to her bosom, and looked out of her wet and burning eyes into his face, 'it were none for Joyce, nor for Miss Cicely, I did all this—it were for you and the White-face.'

Joyce loved him ; her love for him filled her whole dim soul with light. She was perfectly humble ; she knew she was a poor savage, and as widely removed from him on one side as she was from the fox or badger on the other. There was no self-secking in her love. It was in this simple, pure, unselfish devotion that the human soul broke into flame and transformed Joyce. She looked up to Herring as she might to a star ; she had no thought of attaining to either. It was enough for her to look up and be led by the light each shed on her way.

Her father was also transformed externally, but remained the same low brute at heart. There was no outer change in the girl, the same foul rags, only more ragged than before, the same dishevelled wretchedness of aspect ; but within, all was different. God spake, and there was light.

Herring looked up at her, wondering, but

still much confused; his head could not endure much thought. She was swaying herself from side to side, still holding his hand between hers in her bosom ; and the tears ran down her tanned cheeks and fell over him—a soft and soothing rain, a rain bearing balm and blessing. She had raised her eyes, and her lips moved.

'What are you saying, Joyce ?' he asked, thinking she was speaking to him, but that he could not hear.

'I were saying nort to you,' she said ; 'I do not know hardly what I were saying, but my heart were that nigh to bursting wi' joy, that I felt I must speak—but not to you—sure I didn't know to whom I were speaking and saying that I were so happy as I never was afore and never will be again. And I tried to say glory rallaluley turned backsy-foremost but the words wouldn't out, and I just cried for gladness, and looked up—that were all.'

'What is that noise ?' asked Herring.

'What ?' she asked, dropping his hand and listening.

There were shouts and cries approaching. Then the crash of a stone against the supporters of the table. Next moment in dashed old Grizzly, without the hat, wild with alarm, and

threw himself on the ground, where he tore off his coat and neckcloth, waistcoat and breeches, and, screaming with rage and terror, threw each article, as it came off, in the faces of the men that peered in at the entrance.

'Take mun! take mun! I will none of 'em! I will never have none o' the sort again.'

His legs were torn and bleeding. One was smeared with white to the knee, the other was of its natural tan.

Some of the miners had seen Cobbledick engaged in adorning his shins with whitewash, dressed out in his borrowed garb, and had set upon him with jeers. He had fled and been pursued.

'I'll hev none of it never more,' he cried, and swore horribly. 'Give me my rags again.'

That was the end of the transformation of Grizzly. But the transformation of Joyce, which was from within, was more enduring.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

HERRING'S STOCKINGS.

JOYCE was unable to retain Herring. Those who had pursued her father saw him lying in the old cromlech, and the secret was out. Moreover, she herself began to see that it was not possible for her to keep him in the den. Her father's behaviour, when left in charge of the patient, had shown her how utterly untrustworthy he was, and Joyce could not always be there.

Ophir had exerted a deteriorating effect on Grizzly. He had become idle; he had learned to beg; he had acquired a taste for rum. He expected Joyce to do everything for him, that he might lounge away his time about the mine, repeating his parrot story to the visitors, putting the dust into the water, and watching them find it.

Old Tramplara and young Sampson had given him money, and the workmen, supposed

all to be sworn abstainers, had indulged him from their bottles of cold alcoholic tea. Like a savage brought suddenly into association with civilised man, he learned their vices, and unlearned none of his own brutality.

When it was known at West Wyke that John Herring was lying ill under the Giant's Table, Mr. Battishill and Cicely sent to have him removed to their house, and poor Joyce offered only a faint, though sullen, resistance. She knew she could not keep him, but she was reluctant to lose him. She knew that it was good for him to go, and she did violence to her own heart in suffering him to be carried away. She followed him to the doorway of West Wyke, holding his hand, and without taking her eyes off him.

'Come, Joyce,' said Cicely, 'you have been so good and devoted hitherto, that you had best remain as nurse. Come in and attend to Mr. Herring till he is well.'

But Joyce shook her head.

'I'll not go under no hellens [slates], or I should smother,' she said. 'Where be you a-going to take 'n to?'

'We shall put him in that room,' answered Cicely, indicating the window.

'There'll be a light there of nights, I reckon. I shall see 'n. And of day, when

vaither don't want nort a-doing, I'll just hop over and sit down outside, in thicky corner o' the garden wall.' Then Joyce grasped Herring's hand in both hers, and the tears filled her eyes. 'It were I, your poor Joyce, as saved you. You'll not forget that, will'y now?'

Then she turned away, and wiped her eyes with the back of her hand. Cicely looked after her. Joyce did not turn back; she walked on with her peculiar free stride, her head down, and her arm across her face.

Herring had been jarred and contused by his fall, and he suffered greatly for a few days. Every movement caused pain. The doctor visited him, and insisted on quiet, and that his head should be kept cool and his mind unoccupied.

The news of Mr. Trampleasure's death and of Sampson's evasion were not communicated to him till it was seen that he troubled his mind about the result of the exposure of Ophir. Nothing could be done, at least by him, in the matter.

Every day Joyce came and sat in a nook of the garden against the wall, looking up at the window. Her hands were unoccupied; she could neither knit nor sew. She platted

her fingers about one knee and remained in the corner as still as though carved out of stone, almost as rugged as though cut out of granite. Herring's bed was near the window, and he went to the casement, and leaning on the sill looked forth and spoke to her. Then her eyes, in which a strange wistfulness had risen up, lighted, and she smiled. She had brought him something, a little bunch of late wild flowers, some coral lichen daintily folded in green moss, a cluster of blackberries, old and inedible, but the sole cluster she could find. These little gifts she would intrust to no one to convey to Herring. No other hand should touch them and divert from him the something which went out from her with them. When he came to the window and looked out, she threw them up at him with so sure an aim that the bunch of borage and crane's-bill, the sprig of heather, or the blackberries, always reached his open hand.

This devotion of Joyce was embarrassing to Herring. As he lay in his bed he thought about her, whether something could not be done to bring her out of her rude life. He spoke his thoughts to Cicely, and she promised co-operation.

Next day, Cicely took a chair into the garden, and seated herself beside Joyce. The

poor girl did not seem pleased with the visit, she had rather be alone.

'I do not think you will see Mr. Herring to-day, Joyce. His head is worse, and he will not be able to rise and speak to you from the window.'

'Why don't he get well faster?' asked Joyce. 'He'd ha' been right by this time wi' me.'

'Well, certainly, you treated him very well. He tells me you gave him capital boiled chicken. How did you manage to get that?'

'I took her,' answered Joyce.

'You stole it!' exclaimed Cicely. 'From whom?'

'From you. I know'd the young maister must have 'n, and so I took 'n. If he'd hev chanced to want milk, I'd ha' milked anybody's cow for 'n. If he'd ha' wanted your head, I'd ha' cut 'n off for him—my own likewise, for that matter. Would you?'

'I do not think I would, Joyce.'

'Then he ought to hev been with us out to the Giant's Table, not here.'

'You profess great readiness to do anything for him, Joyce. He was speaking to me about you yesterday, and wishing I could teach you something.'

'I don't want no teaching of nort,' said Joyce, sullenly.

'But would you not like to learn to knit?'

'No,' answered Joyce, 'I don't want to larn nort. What do'y knit with them long sticking pins?'

'Stockings, Joyce.'

'Vaither don't wear none ; I don't, neither. Them's no good to us.'

Then the upper casement opened and Herring leaned out.

'What, Joyce!' he called ; 'is Miss Cicely teaching you to knit? That is right. You are going to knit my stockings for me in future. I promise you I will wear none but those of your knitting.'

'Give me the pins,' said Joyce, vehemently. 'I'll larn.'

'Go back, Mr. John,' said Cicely ; 'you know you are forbidden to rise to-day. Go back, or you will be worse to-morrow.'

'Is the maister not getting better?' asked Joyce, anxiously.

'He is; but his recovery is slow. His head has been injured, and we must take care that there be no relapse. We can pray to God for him, Joyce.'

The girl looked round full in her face inquiringly.

'Will that make 'n well?'

'I trust so.'

'Better than the doctor's medicine?'

'It helps the doctor to cure him.'

'I know nothing about it,' said Joyce. 'Did the maister pray for me when I were scat?'

Cicely could not take on herself to answer.

'I be sure he did,' said Joyce, confidently. 'Why did I ax you about it? If that would hev made me well, he'd a done it. You don't know the maister as I do.'

'Do you know about God?' asked Cicely.

'See there, now!' exclaimed Joyce, with animation, 'that be 'zackly what the maister once axed of I; and I sed, Sure I do, I see 'n every day when it bain't raining and there be no clouds. I reckon I thought he meant the sun. But I know better now, and I'll tell'y how I comed to know. Thicky night as the maister were thrown down and hurted by Cap'n Sampson, I thought he were sure to die in my airms. And I felt then that I must say something and ax some one for help—some one as wouldn't want to take 'n away from me. It weren't the sun as I spoke to, for the sun had gone down. I don't know

'zackly what and where he was I called to, but I knowed very well he were up where the sun be by daytime, but he as I mean were there o' night time ekally well. Then, after that, when the young maister were able to open his eyes and speak, I were that lifted up with gladness that my heart were nigh to starting, and I could do nort but cry tears, and tell he as I mean—but I don't know a mite who he be—how glad I were. I know very well he weren't the sun, for, you sees, the sun were then a-sinking, and I never gave 'n a thought for a minute to look at 'n. I looked right up, up, up ; and there were over me the great covering table stone, and I seemed to go right through thicky and see above the clouds as well, and the stars, and I'm blessed if I know where to. I be no skollard I can say nort but glory rallaluley and kinkum-kum.'

'Kinkum-kum!' repeated Cicely, with a puzzled look.

'Sure—what else? I reckon he begins with Our Vaither, and he goes on to kinkum-kum ; but I know nort more nor that. I ha' heard the Methody vellers a say it at their meetings on the moor.'

Cicely laughed ; she could not help it—she was tickled.

'You have made a comical muddle of it,' she said, and turned her head to conceal her amusement.

'I don't know, and I don't care,' said Joyce, doggedly. 'He heard it, up there, when I said it, that I knows, sure-ly; and he didn't laugh, that I knows also.'

'Shall I teach you what it really is?'

'No,' said Joyce, resentfully; 'you laugh. If it be good for me, I'll ax the young maister to larn me when he be well. I sed them same words to he once—what make you giggle—and he didn't laugh; he didn't even smile, but I saw that in his eyes was more like tears. However, the words be good as they be, and I sez them scores and scores of times by day and by night, thinking of him as is sick, and he up there;' she pointed with her finger—not to the window, but far, far above it. 'He as I knows nort about, don't laugh, but listens, just as the maister listened when I said them to he at first; and he takes off his hat, as did the maister.'

'I wish I could persuade you to come indoors, Joyce. It is cold out here, the wind blows keenly over the garden wall, and I cannot remain here.'

'I bain't cold,' said Joyce; 'you can go

in, I don't want'y here. I'll bide here alone a bit. But I'll larn the knitting and make the maister his stockings. I will, sure. He sed he'd never wear none but what I made, and what he sez he sticks to.'

A few days later Herring came down. He was now much better, though still stiff and bruised. His mind was perfectly clear, and he was impatient of his confinement.

'Mr. Battishill,' said he, 'now is our opportunity; Ophir is done, and Upaver begins. I will make a bid for the plant of Ophir, and remove it to the silver lead. I will rent Upaver of you, and mine there on my own account.'

'Very well,' answered Mr. Battishill, 'I can say with the shepherd in the "Winter's Tale," "Now, bless thyself, I meet with things dying, thou with things new-born." I was set on Ophir; you never doubted in Upaver.'

'You forget, sir, you were the finder of the silver lead.'

'Ah, yes; but I was drawn aside by the glitter of the gold of Ophir. I am sorry for Ophir, too. It was a dream of splendour. But again, with Paulina, "To the noble heart, what's gone and what's past help, should be past grief."'

'You have been at your Shakespeare, sir, whilst I have been upstairs.'

'To whom else should I go, John? "For I do love that man," said rare Ben Jonson of him; and who that has mind and heart does not say the same. Shakespeare is the common and personal friend of humanity. By the way, John, there are some letters for you. We would not let you have them before now, as, no doubt, they are on business—they come from Launceston.'

Herring looked at them. Their purport is already known. They were from the directors of Ophir.

'If Miss Cicely will write for me a letter about the machinery at Ophir, I will sign it,' he said; 'we had better secure it at once. I knew that Ophir would fail, and that was the reason why I did not hurry to get machinery for the silver lead. Now we shall secure the entire plant under half-price.'

'Oh, John, how far further ahead you see than do I! But you are calculating on working the mine yourself. How can you combine a mineralogical captaincy with military duties?'

'I have sold out,' said Herring, slightly colouring.

'Sold out, my boy! sold out after having

been in the army only a few years! That is a very rash and inconsiderate proceeding.'

'I could hardly help myself,' he answered. 'I got into trouble. When the accident to Mr. Strange and his daughter took place I was on my way to Exeter to rejoin my regiment. I had been summoned back. I could not desert the Countess Mirelle, with her father dead and without a protector; and so I wrote to my Colonel for a short extension of leave. He refused it; but addressed his reply to Welltown, my little place in Cornwall, to which he had written before. At Welltown my presence here was unknown, and the letter was forwarded to Exeter, and it lay at my quarters till I went there, which, as you know, was not for some time. When I got to Exeter at last, I found that my neglect had got me into a serious scrape. Not only so, but the regiment was at Portsmouth, under immediate orders to sail for Honduras. I had difficulty in exchanging. Moreover, I felt that I must be here, to superintend the working of the silver lead mine; so I sold out.'

'John,' exclaimed Mr. Battishill, 'it is all very fine your pretending that interest in the icy Countess and enthusiasm over a mine detained you. Nothing of the sort. You found us in trouble and unable to help

ourselves, and so you sacrificed your own prospects for the sake of pulling us through.' He pressed the young man's hand. 'I owe you a debt I can never repay.'

Mr. Battishill did not know all. He knew nothing of Mirelle's diamonds consigned to Herring's trust. He entertained no suspicion of the interest Herring felt in that cold and haughty girl. He little dreamed that Herring had taken on himself the double office of guardian angel to Mirelle as well as to the house of Battishill. He did not suppose that even care for that poor savage, Joyce, had mingled with the other motives in deciding the young man on abandoning his military career.

When Herring came out of doors for the first time, he found Joyce in the garden awaiting him. She was crying and laughing for joy.

'Maister,' she said, 'you will keep your word about them stockings.'

'Certainly,' he replied with a smile. 'I give you three months in which to learn to knit, and after that I will wear no stockings but those of your knitting.'

'Good-bye,' she said abruptly.

'Whither are you going?'

'To larn to knit,' she answered.

CHAPTER XXXV.

BEGGARY.

Hope is hard to kill. One last desperate effort Orange made to recover the Captain. That same night, whilst Mirelle was writing to John Herring, Orange wrote to Trecarrel, but her letter was not as brief as that of Mirelle.

'Harry,—Now the last shelter is refused us. We must leave this house the day after to-morrow. That is, the day when the sale at Dolbeare takes place. We cannot go thither, we cannot stay here. We have none to look to for advice but you. You *must* give it us; you are bound to assist us. Remember, had the disclosure and death of my father taken place one hour later, everything would have been changed, and I should have been your wife; then I would have opened Trecarrel to my poor mother. You cannot take advantage of an accident which

intervened to break off our marriage. I do not ask you now to renew that contract; I ask you only to come to the aid of a widow and an orphan, and to help them to find shelter for their heads.'

She sent this note to Trecarrel by a boy next morning. He brought answer that the reply would arrive later. Then Orange went out. She was not sanguine of success with the Captain, for she had failed in a personal interview, and it is easier to refuse by letter than by word of mouth. Still, some sort of hope fluttered in her heart. She could not believe that the Captain would be so mean as wholly to desert them, and deny them his advice. She had not asked in her letter for more than that. Perhaps she had been too exacting when she forced her presence upon him last night.

She went to visit her friend Miss Bowdler. If the Captain had failed her, Miss Bowdler would not. Miss Bowdler was a well-to-do young lady, who lived with her 'Pa' in a large, handsome, red-brick house of Queen Anne's period, a house rich within with plaster-work of exquisite design and wood-carving by Grinling Gibbons. The house was one of many rooms, and it was solely tenanted by the young lady with the red eyelashes

and her 'Pa.' They were rich, but were not received into county society; a source of vexation to Miss Bowdler, though her 'Pa' was indifferent so long as his creature comforts were attended to. Surely Miss Bowdler would give her friends shelter for a few days. Orange was not aware that Miss Bowdler had reckoned on using her (Orange) when Mrs. Trecarrel as her door into society of a superior class; and that now the marriage was broken off and this door was shut, the disappointment was bitter.

Orange rang the bell, and the summons was answered by the footman, working himself into his coat, with unbuttoned waistcoat. He looked at Miss Trampleasure superciliously, and proceeded leisurely to button his waistcoat.

'Is Miss Bowdler at home?'

'I don't know.' Then, with a jerk, he brought a red hand through the sleeve.

'I asked if your mistress were in,' said Orange, with indignation.

'I ain't deaf—I heard,' replied the footman. 'I don't think she is what is called "At Home."'

'She is to be seen?'

'I can't take on myself to say that. You can stop in the 'all, and I'll go and inquire.'

Slowly, still buttoning himself, the serving man stalked away.

Orange's cheek flamed, and the tears mounted. This man had been all obsequiousness before the crash.

Suddenly a loud voice in her ear startled her.

'You're a beggar, you're a beggar! Oh, shock-ing, shock-ing! Not a penny. Cluck, cluck, cluck!'

Orange recovered herself at once. Near the door on a perch sat a white cockatoo with pink feathers on her face, and cold, hard, unsympathetic eyes, staring at her.

'Polly,' said Orange, bitterly, 'what you say is too true.'

'Oh, shock-ing! Does your mother know you are out? What o'clock, you beggar? Oh, oh! Not a pen-ny! Hot cockles! Cluck, cluck!'

'Polly, Polly, don't make such a noise! Pa!—oh!'

A door opened, and a red-haired head appeared. It was that of Miss Bowdler. The moment she saw Orange she started back. The footman had gone to the greenhouse in quest of her.

'Oh, Sophy! dear Sophy!' exclaimed Orange, springing forward.

Miss Bowdler recoiled from the outstretched hands.

'Good gracious, Miss Trampleasure, what a time of day for a call! My dear Pa does not like to be interrupted at this time; I read to him his newspaper of a morning. You will not, I know, detain me. Yes, Pa! coming, Pa! coming in an instant! There have been disturbances in the North among the cotton-spinners. Pa is in a fever to hear the particulars.'

'Hot cockles!' said the parrot, sentimentally, putting her head on one side and winking.

'Oh, Sophie, do listen to me. I want so much to see you. I have a favour I wish to ask you.'

'Pa, Pa! I'm coming.'

'Tol-de-rol-de-rol!' said the parrot. Then, swinging herself round on her perch, she went into convulsions of laughter.

'I pray you excuse me,' said Miss Bowdler; 'I told John Thomas expressly to say I was not at home in the morning, because Pa is so particular.'

'Do you hear?' asked the footman, who had appeared on the scene, now in full condition, every button in its place. 'Miss Bowdler is NOT AT 'OME.' Then he opened the door

pompously. The red-haired lady took the opportunity to dart back into her room.

'You're a beggar!' shouted the cockatoo, with a look of devilry in her eye; 'you're a beggar! Not a pen-ny! Shock-ing, shock-ing! Oh, oh!' and then screamed and ran round and round her perch, laughing.

The door shut with a slam behind Orange. She set her teeth and stamped her foot.

'Would that I were Mrs. Trecarrel for one day only,' she said, 'that I might insult this wretched girl before county people.'

Her mother had a friend in the town, a very intimate confidante, a stout old lady, Mrs. Trelake, widow of a mayor of Launceston, a brewer. Mrs. Trampleasure had insisted on her daughter going to this old lady, and asking her to receive them for a week. Orange went thither, with her heart on fire from the humiliations she had undergone at Miss Bowdler's house. Orange was received at once with cordiality by Mrs. Trelake. She was a lady of moderate stature, with an immense throat. The throat was not a column supporting the head, but the face was sculptured out of the column. There was something good-natured in the face. Possibly she may have been good-looking when young; but it was now impossible, on seeing her, to

observe anything but the solid trunk of throat. The old lady was stout, but neither her stoutness nor her throat incommoded her; she moved with nimbleness. She was, moreover, robust in health. Mrs. Trelake was a woman destitute of vanity. She had a neat hand, and was ignorant of it. She was aware that her neck was ugly, but she took no pains to hide it. She was one of those persons who make no effort to please, and are themselves easily pleased. She liked every one with whom she was brought in contact, but she loved nobody. She was the same genial person with every one, rich and poor, with her servants and with her guests. All she asked of her acquaintances was that they should amuse her, and of her servants that they should give her no trouble. Her sympathy was superficial. If an acquaintance spoke to her of trouble or good fortune, of embarrassment or great expectations, she entered into the situation from the outside, and without the smallest internal appreciation. If she cried with a companion, it was not because her friend had occasion for tears, but because her friend was in tears. If she laughed, it was not at a joke which she made no effort to understand, but because the joker laughed.

If you who knew her so well had told her

your wife was dead with inexpressive voice, she would have received the information with indifference ; if you had told her the same news with broken utterance, she would have sobbed ; if you had told her the same fact with a smile on your lips, she would have sniggered. And your wife, remember, was her intimate friend.

People of this description are more common than is generally supposed. We have occupied some time over the portrait of Mrs. Trelake, not because she acts a prominent part in this story, but because we desire to inform our readers what to expect from the Mrs. Trelakes of their acquaintance when they appeal to them for help in their troubles.

Mrs. Trelake received Orange with warmth and pity. She saw that the girl was in trouble. The heart of Orange was full of her reception at Miss Bowdler's, and she recounted it to the old lady. Mrs. Trelake was shocked : she held up her hands, she blessed her stars, she vowed she could never look on Miss Bowdler again with regard ; she undertook to cut her in the streets. (Mrs. Trelake dined with Miss Bowdler the same evening, and, when Miss Sophy told her version of the story, Mrs. Trelake was indignant over the dinner table at the audacity

of Orange in presuming to thrust herself upon the Bowdlerian privacy.)

'To-morrow is the sale at Dolbeare,' said Orange.

'The sale, my dear! How dreadful!' Mrs. Trelake looked round the room at her pretty china and her case of stuffed humming-birds. 'I could not bear to part with my things. Every article sold, I suppose. Will those pretty china jars go, with the dragons on them? I wonder whether I could get them cheap?'

'Even to the beds and chairs. The house still belongs to us. That is, we have the lease, but we shall have to let it, so as to pay the rent.'

'Not able to let the house nor pay the rent! Oh, my dear, how dreadful!'

'I said that we should have to let it.'

'I understood perfectly, my sweet child.'

'We cannot go into the house stripped of everything. We cannot stay longer at Mr. Flamank's. It was very good of him to take us in, but we are unable to trespass further on his kindness.'

'Certainly, my poor child, it would not do.'

'Then—to-morrow, whither are we to go?'

'Really, my dear, I don't know. I have a bad head at guessing conundrums. Is it a conundrum, though ?' asked Mrs. Trelake, doubtfully. She had not been listening. She was calculating her chance of securing the dragon vases at the sale.

'You knew and loved my mother. I am sure you love her now.'

'Ardently, tenderly,' said Mrs. Trelake, effusively.

'Will you take it ill if I ask a favour of you ?'

'Not at all.'

'Would you receive us for a week? I do not ask for more. In a week we shall have had time to settle something as to our future.'

'Oh, Orange ! don't say a week ; say a month. My house is at your disposal. I really have a fair cook ; and now tell me, what does your mother like ? For breakfast, now ? Is it grilled kidneys ? You must put me up to all her little fancies, and I will instruct my cook to meet them. She is a good soul and does what I desire. When will you come ? To-morrow ? Oh, try to come this evening. Well—if not, at what o'clock ? Tell me the time and I will have a dainty meal ready. Orange ! I have a pheasant in the larder. I hope you like pheasant.'

'We shall be with you at noon. How good and kind you are, Mrs. Trelake!'

'Not at all. I am delighted.'

Then Orange left. Ten minutes later Mrs. Trelake wrote an elaborate note of apology, to say that her servants objected to receiving so large a party at once. The cook would not stay, and how could she replace so valuable and obliging a servant? The housemaid said that three persons extra would throw too much work upon her; and she would go. So, she, Mrs. Trelake, was very sorry, but for peace and quietness sake, she had to yield, and must withdraw the promise to receive the Trampleasure party. She herself had nothing to do with this, but servants were becoming so masterful that the only way in which she, an elderly lady, could get on was to yield to them in every point.

'We live in the world, we didn't make it,' concluded Mrs. Trelake; 'we must shape ourselves to the world, not force the world to fit us.'

Whilst Orange was standing at the window, reading this letter to her mother, she saw a woman whom she knew coming to the back door. This was a rough girl who did the scullery work at Trecarrel. She brought the answer from the Captain.

Orange at once darted into the garden and intercepted the girl on her way to the kitchen.

'You bear a letter for me.'

'Yes, miss.'

She handed her a letter. Orange turned it in her hands. The address was badly written by some uneducated person.

'Who gave you this?'

'Mrs. Kneebone, the housekeeper.'

'Is there nothing from Captain Trecarrel?'

The girl hesitated.

Orange tore the note open. It was written in the same hand as the address.

'Please, miss, the Captain be very serius indispodged, and heve a took to his bed. He carnt rite, according hev axed me to say so. Your's full of respex, JOANNA KNEEBONE.'

Orange looked up, angry, her heart beating violently. The girl was still there, but moving towards the kitchen.

'What do you want in the house?' asked Orange.

'There be another letter, miss, I hev to deliver.'

'Well, give it to me.'

'It be for the other young lady,' answered the girl; 'and I hev to give it only into her hand.'

'You cannot do that,' said Orange; 'she is gone out.'

'Please, miss, will she be gone for long?'

'She will not return till late at night. Give it me.'

'But, miss, I were told by the Cap'n partickler not to let nobody hev it but the young lady herself; it were very partickler.'

'Then you must wait here till night. This is not my house. I cannot ask you into the kitchen to sit down; you must wait about in the road. It is raining, and you will be wet through. I cannot help it; it must be so unless you let me have the letter.'

'You'll be sure to give it, miss?'

'Of course I will. Do you mistrust me?'

'There it be, miss; but I doubt if the Captain will be best pleased I haven't waited and let the lady have it herself.'

The letter was delivered. The address was in the Captain's handwriting. The seal was large, in red wax, stamped with the Trecarrel arms; Orange knew them well—two chevronels, a crescent for a difference. The girl turned to go away.

'Good afternoon, miss.'

Orange took no notice of the salutation. She was looking at the letter. As the girl departed, she glanced back. Orange was turn-

ing the letter, and examining, first the superscription, then the seal. There was an expression in her face which made the girl say, 'I doubt if I have done right now in giving her thicky letter.'

Orange went in. She ascended the stairs to her own room, or rather, to the room she shared with Mirelle. Mirelle was there. That which Orange had told the girl was not true ; Orange had told an untruth deliberately, knowing it was an untruth. Orange stood in the doorway and looked at Mirelle, and a flash shot from her dark eyes. Mirelle had not raised her head to see who entered, and she did not therefore encounter and observe the glance of hatred and jealousy flung at her.

Orange quickly shut the door and descended the stairs again.

She took her bonnet and went out,—went out into the rain. What cared she for rain? She went into a lane where she saw no one, and would be unobserved. Then she tore the letter open. It was written in Captain Trecarrel's best hand, and ran as follows:—

'My dear Mirelle,—Indisposition prevents my calling and paying my respects to you as I should have desired. I am in profound

distress to learn the predicament in which you have been placed by the unscrupulousness of a man whom I will not designate as he deserves, because he is dead. *De mortuis nil nisi bonum.* Observe this maxim strictly, and Mr. Trampleasure will never be heard of again. I write now to entreat you to accept the asylum of my aunt's house. She lives at Penzance, and is both a charming old lady and a strict Catholic. I have written to her to-day, stating your case, and by the middle of the week will have her reply. I make no question but that she will open her house and her heart to you. One little bit of advice I know you will excuse my offering. I saw, on the night of the ball at Dolbeare, that you wore a very valuable set of diamonds, worth, I dare say, over a thousand pounds. On no account allow the vultures—you know to whom I allude—to set their claws in them. Mrs. T. and Miss O. are at the present moment impecunious, and impecuniosity is a temptation to unscrupulousness,—an infirmity that runs in the blood of a family that I will not name. You do not know the value of these stones, and might be sorely taken in if you disposed of them to a country jeweller. Moreover, I presume they belonged to your dear mother, and it would be unjust to her

memory to get rid of them to relieve the present pressing necessities of persons in whom she could feel no possible interest. If you doubt being able to keep them safely—I feel convinced that you will be besieged with entreaties to sell them—trust them to my aunt or to me. I remain, my dear Mirelle, yours very faithfully,

'HARRY TRECARREL.'

Mirelle never saw that letter. Orange tore it with her teeth, and then trampled the fragments into the mire. She walked up and down that lane in a fever, regardless of the rain that fell and drenched her.

Her faith in Trecarrel was gone. She was a girl who had been brought up to believe in nothing ; neither in truth, nor honesty, nor sincerity. But she had believed in Trecarrel, and now that one faith was in fragments. She saw him as he really was, in all his despicable meanness. She scorned him, she hated him, but with that hate was mingled love, or rather that hate was but wounded, writhing, anguished love. During the night she rose from her bed. Mirelle slept with her. The rain had ceased, the clouds had broken, and the moon shone into the room. She left her bed because she could not endure

the silver glare over her face. As she stood by the bed she looked down on the face of the sleeping Mirelle. It was like the face of a dead woman sculptured in the purest Carrara marble, and lovely as the noblest chisel could cut.

Orange drew the pillow from the bed, and held it up, that the pillow might shadow the white face. The heart of Orange beat furiously. She hated Mirelle. She had but to put that pillow over her mouth, throw herself upon it, and with her strong arms hold down the tossing figure,—that figure so frail and feeble, and then she could laugh at the schemes of Captain Trecarrel.

But no. Orange put the pillow back with a curl of the lip. She could not do that, easy as it was to do. But as she stood over Mirelle she vowed never to permit Captain Trecarrel to take that pale girl to the hearth from which he had cast Orange Tramplara.

'You're a beggar! you're a beggar!' that terrible screech of the parrot came back in her ear at that moment. 'True, true!' said Orange, between her teeth, 'I am a beggar. I have asked for love! I have begged for help! I have begged for sympathy! I have implored advice! I have been refused everything, and given rebuffs and insults. I have

but one thing remaining to me, a hold on Mirelle, beggar though I be, and never shall he who has refused me all I asked, give to her what he has denied to me, his betrothed.'

The sleeping girl turned her head away. The fierce eyes of Orange stabbed her and distressed her, even in sleep.

Orange put her hands over her heart. It was bounding noisily, the moonlight throbbed in her eyes, the thoughts beat in her brain. That horrible idea of the pillow, and Mirelle under it, came over her again. She saw the feet beating in the bed in rhythm with the pulsation of her heart, and her hands clenched as though gripping the delicate wrists. As one at the edge of a precipice turns giddy and feels impelled to throw himself where he fears to fall, so was it now with Orange. A dread —a dread was on her lest this horrible thought might in a moment become a fact. She turned away. She paced the room ; she could not rest in a bed. She was like a wild beast in a cage.

'Orange!'

She started. Mirelle was sitting up.

'What do you want?' asked Orange hoarsely, and stood between Mirelle and the

moonlight, that her face might not be seen and betray her heart.

'He is coming.'

'Who is coming?' asked Orange, fiercely.

'I knew he would.'

'Who? who? who?' Orange clutched the pillow convulsively.

'John Herring. I wrote to him. I have been dreaming, and I saw him open my letter, and he started up and cried, "I am coming to you, Mirelle. I am coming to you with help."'

CHAPTER XXXVI.

MIRELLE'S GUESTS.

A TRUCE was concluded between the Reverend Israel and his wife. He undertook to depart on a missionary circuit during the remainder of the time that the ladies were in her house. Mrs. Flamank very unreasonably charged her husband with encouraging Orange in disorderly ways, the encouragement consisting in privately combating his wife's attack on Orange's character, and finding a charitable explanation for her leaving the house at night. Mr. Flamank departed early in the morning as a deputation for the parent missionary society of the religious community to which he belonged, to advocate the claims of a very promising mission to the heathen in the Imaginary Islands.

Hitherto this station had been promising rather than performing, but now it had real cause for congratulation and for appealing to

the charitable. A native chieftain, with his entire family, consisting of several wives and a tail of children like the tail of a comet, had become a convert.

Ho-hum was the capital of the Imaginary Isles, situated in the largest of them, with a good port at which vessels from England called with gowns and novels for the missionaries' wives and daughters. At Ho-hum there were four rival missionary churches. The Imaginary group formed an archipelago, but as Ho-hum was most considerable of all the islands, not one of the churches would be content with evangelising a smaller island, and thereby confess itself inferior in pretensions to those communities which occupied the major island. Penelope by night unravelled her embroidery of the day. The work of Christian missions is like that of Penelope, with this difference, that each is engaged in unravelling the work of all the others.

In the island of Ho-ha, a chieflet of indifferent character, Hokee-Pokee-Wankee-Fum by name, had proved himself such a nuisance to the heathen society that he was expelled the island with his family and took refuge in that of Ho-hum, where, however, he met with a chilling reception from his native

friends. Finding himself destitute of means, and cold-shouldered by his own people, he lent a ready ear to the solicitations of the One-and-Only-Christian missionary to receive instructions in his catechetical school. As this instruction was supplemented with mealies, he listened and ate. He liked the chapel of the station, because it was adorned with pictures and gilding and much frippery. Then the Reverend the Superior of the establishment wrote home to the 'Annals of the Faith' a letter in the most remarkable English ever penned. It was to this effect, 'that Ho-kee, a chieftain of the island of Ho-ha, having heard the verities which were at this time now inculcated at the mission of the Immaculate Joseph in Ho-hum, had left, like Abraham, his home, and had come to seek the verity. This aborigine, passionated with a vivid desire to apprehend, had commenced to receive the holy instructions into a heart truly recognisant,' &c.

But, presently, the rival station of the Pure and Reformed Christians drew away the 'recognisant aborigine,' having offered him meat as well as mealies with its instructions. At this station the missionary laboured to divest his catechumen of the unprimitive and erroneous teaching in which his mind had

been enveloped by the One-and-Onlies. And he wrote home, in good English, an account of the enlightened 'native chief Pokee, who had been unable to digest the erroneous doctrines of the sister Church of the One-and-Onlies, and whose soul was refreshed by the pure and primitive truths (divested of human accretions); but as some expense had been incurred,' &c. &c.

Hokee-Pokee-Wankee-Fum was, however, before long shaken in his attachment to the Pure and Reformed, by the missionary insisting on his limiting himself to one wife. This was more than he could endure, and he opened his ears to the ministrations of the pastor of the Universal Christians. By him also he was told that he must have but one wife, but a concession was made that the rest might be retained under the designation of domestics. With the Universals, the name, not the thing, was essential. The Universal teacher set vigorously to work to strip the mind of Wankee of all the unevangelical instructions he had received from the Pure and Reformed, and he wrote home concerning his convert, to the 'Universal Missionary Reporter,' that Wankee in testimony of his sincerity had retained but one wife out of the three score; but he added, as wives were valuable commo-

dities, this was much like a farmer voluntarily abandoning his flock of sheep and limiting himself to one ewe lamb. Under these circumstances, it became the duty of Christians to indemnify this zealous Wankee, therefore he must solicit subscriptions, &c. &c.

Unfortunately, this missionary was strict on the subject of temperance, and forbade the use of spirits. Now Wankee was fond of grog, and when he had been reprimanded and put on short commons of food, for yielding to his passions, he grew sulky and deserted to the Particular Christians, who allowed grog and had no sharp and defined belief or code of morals, but a very decided disbelief in everything taught in the other churches. Accordingly the missioner proceeded still further to divest Wankee-Fum of his acquired faith, and he was brought to that condition in which he protested against everything and professed nothing. To his bewildered mind, Christianity seemed a bird of paradise on which the sectaries had fallen with the object of restoring it to its primitive condition as it emerged from the egg. One pulled out the gorgeous tail, another stripped off the coronal of plumes, a third reft off the wing feathers, and the last, after having plucked and singed it,

held up a naked and expiring monster as typical primitive Christianity.

The Particular pastor wrote home to say that he had converted a native prince of the name of Fum, with his entire family, consisting of one hundred and six souls ; that a great door was open for the advance of vague and vapid Christianity. He was resolved (D.V.) to send Prince Fum to his own island of Ho-ha, as native teacher and founder of a church. To do this effectually, money was needed, &c. &c.

This was the glad news received by Mr. Flamank, and he hastened to divulge it in missionary meetings of the Particular Christians in Cornwall, and to collect money for establishing Hokee-Pokee-Wankee-Fum in the island of Ho-ha as an evangelist.

On the one condition that the Reverend Israel Flamank should absent himself from home did his 'sweet soul' Betsy Delilah consent to allow Mrs. Trampleasure, her daughter, and Mirelle to remain a couple of days longer in the house.

Mrs. Flamank was a kind woman in her way, but that way was a hard one. She felt pity for the widow, and as much tenderness as it was possible for her to feel for Mirelle ;

but she detested Orange. And the reason why she liked Mirelle was because Mirelle had snubbed her husband, and if there was one thing in the world that Mrs. Flamank delighted in it was in seeing Israel suffer rebuff.

Thus it was that Mrs. Trampleasure and Orange were left without even the minister to advise them what to do and whither to go.

The day had come on which they must depart. It was the day announced for the auction at Dolbeare. Whenever Orange went into the town and passed under the old gateway she saw plastered against the wall an announcement of the sale, and details of the desirable lots into which the Trampleasure furniture had been assorted.

Mrs. Trampleasure was all day in tears. She was thinking of mats and cushions, worked with her own hands, which would go to the hammer. The cruet-stand, also; O woe! woe! There was, moreover, a set of Blair's 'Sermons' she had been wont to read on rainy Sundays—sermons devoid of ideas, and therefore adapted to a mind incapable of receiving ideas. She lamented, likewise, a Rollin's 'Ancient History,' which she had attempted ineffectually to read for the last thirty years. Though she had not read

Rollin, the sight of his back on her shelf, in many volumes, gave her a sensation of solidity and well-grounding. But the thought that especially troubled her was that she had left behind in Dolbeare two pillow pincushions fastened to the back of the best bed. In her hurry and distress at leaving she had forgotten these treasures, and they would be sold with the furniture. The pincushions were of white satin, ornamented with figures and flowers in coloured beads. They were heart-shaped—of the size of a bullock's heart, heavily stuffed. They depended, by white satin ribands, from mother-of-pearl buttons. These pincushions had been given to Mrs. Trampleasure on her marriage by a great-aunt. They would hold, on a moderate computation, a thousand pins apiece. What any one in bed could want two thousand pins for did not enter into the consideration of the artist who constructed them. For some years these pincushions had adorned the head of the bed occupied by Mr. and Mrs. Trampleasure. But they exhibited a tendency to fall down on the sleepers in an unprovoked and startling manner. Mrs. Trampleasure had sewn them up repeatedly, passing the stitches through the mother-of-pearl buttons; but whether spiders ate the threads, or the damask bed back was unable

to support the burden, down one or other would come, till at length Mr. Trampleasure, upon whose nose one had pounded whilst enjoying a refreshing slumber, woke with an oath, and flung both the guilty and the innocent pincushion across the room, vowing not to suffer their re-erection above his head any more. After this they were banished to the spare bedroom, and, though not under Mrs. Trampleasure's daily observation, they did not cease to be dear to her soul. These precious pincushions, through inadvertence, were doomed to fall into strange, perhaps inappreciative, hands. The thought made her weep and sniff.

'Mother,' said Orange, 'everything is packed. All is ready for us to start. We must decide now whither we will go.'

'There was Charity on one, with a feeding-bottle in her hand—I believe a Florence flask, and a backie-pipe stem stuck through the cork—as nat'ral as nat'ral; and on the other was Hope with her anchor, and a serpent twined round it, as I thought; but your dear father would insist it was a rope. "But," said I, "look: it has an eye." However, your father maintained that was only a loop in the cord.' Mrs. Trampleasure was thinking of the pincushions.

'Whither are we to go, mother?' asked Orange.

'I am sure I don't know,' answered Mrs. Trampleasure, 'without my Blair, and my Rollin, and my pinkies.' Mirelle was sitting at the window. The day was passing, and no signs were seen of John Herring.

'I wonder how them pinkies have sold,' mused the old woman; 'I shouldn't wonder if they've fetched a lot of money. I should say they were cheap at five pounds. If I get a chance I'll buy them back at that figure.'

'We have no money,' said Orange, 'except a trifle which will be consumed in inn expenses; we must go to one, as we have seen nothing about lodgings. Mirelle, are you awake?'

'Yes, Orange.'

'You will have to give French lessons, and I will do the housework at home and take in sewing. So perhaps we shall be able to keep body and soul together.'

'I am waiting,' answered Mirelle.

'What nonsense!' said Orange, impatiently. 'Do you suppose that Mr. Herring will trouble himself about us?'

'I am sure he will.'

'He has not come, and he must have received your letter.'

'Please, ma'am'—it was the servant who spoke from the doorway—'the mistress hev sent to say, shall I go and fetch a coach?'

Orange looked at her mother. Mrs. Trampleasure wept.

'Yes,' said Orange; 'we will go at once. Yes, girl: go and fetch one.'

'It is unnecessary,' said Mirelle, rising. 'A coach has come. John Herring is here.'

A rap at the door, and in another moment John Herring was ushered into the room.

'Thank you! thank you for coming,' said Mirelle, advancing to meet him, and holding out both her hands.

Herring was not looking strong. His fall, and a hard ride during the night from West Wyke to Launceston, had made him look pale and worn and unwell. But Orange, her mother, and Mirelle were too engaged in their own troubles to notice the change in him.

'You have come to take us away from this house?' asked Mirelle.

'Yes, I have. You called me.'

He held her hands, and looked into her eyes, and was lost in wonder at their depth and beauty, and in a dream of love. She met his gaze frankly, but, as it was prolonged, her eyes fell.

'Whither are you going to take us?' asked Orange.

But Herring had ears for one voice only; he had thoughts at that moment for one person only, who stood before him.

'Oh, Mr. Herring,' said Mirelle—and she looked up timidly again, but, again encountering his eyes, lowered her dark lashes—'take us away—anywhere. We cannot remain here any longer. We are turned out of the house. We trust you perfectly; take us where you will.'

'Let me lead you to the coach.'

Then Orange said to Mrs. Trampleasure, 'Mother, you must go and thank Mrs. Flamank before leaving.' But at that moment this good lady appeared, relieved by the sight of the carriage standing at the house door. Her visitors were departing.

She received the thanks given her for her hospitality with graciousness. She even kissed Mirelle on the brow. 'I hope,' she said, 'condescendingly, 'that you will find a comfortable and happy home, my child. Aha!'—she looked at Herring, and then at Mirelle—'I have my suspicions. Well, well! Time will show if they are justified.'

Herring saw the ladies into the coach, and mounted the box beside the driver.

The carriage drew up at the door of Dolbeare. Herring descended, opened the coach door, let down the steps, and presented his arm to Mrs. Trampleasure.

'Mr. Herring,' exclaimed Orange, turning white, 'what is the meaning of this? Do you not know that this is no longer our home? You have not heard. You have made a mistake.'

'Pray step inside, ladies,' said he, smiling.

Bewildered, not knowing what to say, all three descended. No; Mirelle was not bewildered; she was perfectly collected. What Mr. Herring did was right. Where he led she followed with confidence; she had entire reliance on him.

They entered the hall. Everything was as it had been: the clock on the stairs was ticking; the door of the dining-room was open; a fire burned in the grate; on the table lay a bundle of old walking-sticks, tied together. Herring took up this bundle.

'But, Mr. Herring,' said Orange, passing her hand across her eyes, 'what is the meaning of this? Are we walking in a dream?'

'This is no dream,' answered Herring. 'Countess, I make over this bundle of old sticks to you; the house goes with them; the rent has been paid for the current year,

in your name; the lease is made over to you. Everything the house contains is yours. Everything has been bought as it stands, in your name.'

Orange and Mirelle stood silent. Neither could comprehend the situation.

Herring did not speak to them for some minutes, he could understand their perplexity. Orange looked round for her mother, but Mrs. Trampleasure had not entered the room.

Presently Herring went on: 'You will find, Countess, that a sum sufficient for the maintenance of the house, and for your comfort, is lodged in the bank, in your name, and that the same sum will be paid quarterly. You can draw as you require. This house, with all its contents, is yours. Everything has been purchased and paid for in your name.'

'Mr. Herring,' put in Orange, speaking with a flushed cheek and a quivering lip, 'what are we here?'

'You have been kind to her when she needed a home, you have done your best to make her comfortable, now you are the guests in this house of the Countess Mirelle Garcia.'

A cry of joy from the upper story, and down the flight and into the room rushed Mrs. Trampleasure, laughing and crying. 'They

are there, they are there, my Orange! Oh, joy!'

'What are there, mother?'

'My own satin pinkies.'

'They are not yours,' said Orange, with a curl of the lip and a hard look settling into her eyes. 'They, like everything else, have been purchased in the name of the Countess Mirelle Garcia de Cantalejo.' She stood and looked at Mirelle from head to foot. A battle was raging in her heart. Should the rage and hate boiling there overflow her lips? She caught Herring's eye fixed inquiringly, suspiciously, on her. Then she dropped a profound curtsey to Mirelle, and said, 'We are not your guests, gracious Countess, but your most humble and obliged servants.'

Then Mirelle threw her arms round Orange, and kissed her cheeks and brow and mouth.

'Dear, dear Orange!' she said, and her tears flowed, 'do not speak thus. You are nothing other to me than a sister.'

Then she looked round to thank Herring, but he was gone.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

A SECOND SUMMONS.

HERRING was gone. He did not remain to explain how it was that everything had fallen to Mirelle. He went because he did not desire to explain anything. In his own mind he had debated what was best to be done. Should he inform her that she had a fortune, part of which he had invested in the West Wyke mortgages, and part he was about to sink in the Upaver lead mine, and part still remained in uncut diamonds, not disposed of? Should he make over everything to her, and free himself of further responsibility?

He hesitated about doing this, and throwing off a charge he had laid on himself. Mirelle was unable of herself to manage what was properly hers. Her ignorance of the world would place her at the mercy of any one who offered to conduct her affairs for her. Orange was engaged to Captain Trecarrel, and would probably marry him when the trouble

about Ophir, and the time of mourning for her father, was over ; and, though Trecarrel was a gentleman and, no doubt, of unimpeachable integrity, still he was a needy man, and might not be a discreet adviser. So Herring resolved to retain his hold over the property, at all events for a while, till the Captain had married Orange, and he had time to decide whether Trecarrel was a man to be trusted to act as guardian to Mirelle.

In a small town every one holds his nose over his neighbour's chimney-top, and knows exactly what is cooking below. In Launceston it was a matter of general conversation that the Countess Mirelle Garcia had come to the aid of the Trampleasures, that she had arranged with the creditors and had made such an offer before the sale took place, that the auction had been abandoned. Every one knew this ; the mayor, the chimney-sweep, the barber, the milliner, and Polly Skittles behind the bar of the Pig and Whistle. Every one knew that Mirelle had money in the bank, and multiplied the sum by four. Now, every one believed that her diamonds were real, and that they were the outward sign of a magnificent fortune behind. Every one, we say, for after the ball at Dolbeare the entire town knew of the diamonds, but the mayor,

the chimney-sweep, the barber, the milliner, and Polly Skittles of the Pig and Whistle concluded they were paste. The one jeweller had tested them and found them paste, and the one jeweller had a wife, and the wife had a tongue. Now, also, every one began to regret that more attention had not been shown her. Those mothers who were burdened with cubs were especially regretful, and resolute to make amends, and bring the Countess to their little parties, and hitch their cubs on to her. Now also Miss Bowdler began to regret having been inhospitable to Orange Trampleasure. Mirelle was a Countess—a foreign Countess, it is true, but still, where titles are rare, a foreign title is better than none. Hitherto, she, as well as the rest of Launceston, down to Polly Skittles, had delighted to talk of her as Miss Strange, because they supposed her poor—a sort of hanger-on to the Tramplaras, but now that the conditions were reversed Launceston society reconsidered the question of her treatment. If foreign titles do descend through the female line—well, this was a foreign title, and the young lady had a legitimate right to bear it. So Launceston, from the mayoress, the chimney-sweeperess, the barber's wife, the milliner, to Polly Skittles behind the bar of

the Pig and Whistle, began to speak of her as the Countess, and Polly went so far as to call the Tramplaras Trampleasures, because of their kinship to Mirelle.

Miss Bowdler speedily convinced herself that she had made a mistake. There were no baronets and their ladies near the capital of Cornwall, and if there had been they would have moved in a sphere unapproachable by Sophy. There was not even a retired oil and colourman, who, as mayor, had been knighted on a royal visit; for royalty never did visit Launceston, not even the Duke of Cornwall, though the city was the capital of the county from which he drew his title, and in which he owned estates. It would be something for Sophy Bowdler to be able to talk of her friend the Countess, and to describe her diamonds, when visiting her relatives in Redruth and Bodmin.

She had made a mistake, and she hastened to repair it. She was the first to visit Dolbeare after the return of the Trampleasures. She did more. She offered a holocaust to secure a renewal of friendship, and the holocaust she offered was John Thomas, the footman, who found himself summarily dismissed for the impertinence of his manner to Miss Trampleasure.

Sophy Bowdler pushed her way into Dolbeare, past the maid who appeared at the door. She herself opened that of the sitting-room, in the old familiar style, and rushed to Orange, to take her to her heart.

Orange hesitated a moment, and then received her overtures with simulated pleasure. It was not her interest to quarrel with old friends.

'You must excuse me, darling Orange, if I was abrupt with you the other day. My Pa, my dear Pa, is, you know, rather short in temper, and I had begun to read to him an account of the riots in the north, when I heard the parrot screaming, and she disturbed him. He swore he would wring Polly's neck. You know I dote on that bird ; and I was so frightened. Pa is a man of his word. So I ran out, and then he called me back, and I was distracted between my desire to see you, and my fears for Poll, and my duty to Pa.'

'Pray do not mention this.'

'But I must, Orange. That impudent John Thomas made me so angry with his want of manner that I had to dismiss him, and now we are on the look-out for another footman. Can you—or can the Countess—recommend me one?'

The next to come was Mrs. Trelake, very

pleased to see her dear old friend, Mrs. Trampleasure, back in Dolbeare again. She was provoked at not having been able to receive her; 'But, my dear, put yourself in my place; what else could I do? However, all is well that ends well! Hah! the China vases with the dragons were not sold after all! We shall have our game of cribbage together as of old.'

Then came Mr. Flamank. His excursion among the Particular Christians on behalf of the mission to Ho-ha, under the ministry of the native prince, Hokee-Pokee-Wankee-Fum, had not been crowned with success. Ophir was too fresh in the memories of men. Some of the Christian auditors had suffered through it; all knew how Flamank had helped to launch the concern, and, although he had taken an active part in exposing the fraud, it was surmised that he had pocketed something by the transaction. Some rudely asserted that the Ho-ha mission was but another Ophir, and that Wankee-Fum was as mythical as Arundell Golitho of Trevorgan, Esq. Mr. Flamank returned from his round much disappointed and depressed. He heard from his wife what had occurred. Then he went to Dolbeare to offer his congratulations. He was surprised and puzzled. If Mirelle were

rich and willing to rescue her kinsfolk from their difficulties, why had she said nothing of her intention before? Why had she allowed him to invite the party to his house and embroil himself with his wife about them?

Perhaps her remittance had not arrived. Perhaps—— But why form conjectures? He did not understand her. Her ways were radically different from the ways of plain Christians. Where these went straight, those went crooked. There are persons mentally shaped like boomerangs. They go out of the hand in one direction, make a sweep half round the horizon, and return to the hand whence they started.

It was possible, as the Countess was rich, that she might interest herself in Ho-ha, and Flamank thought that, by dwelling on the social and moral aspects of the case, and not pressing the religious, she might be induced to help Wankee-Fum liberally.

Mirelle received Mr. Flamank civilly. She felt that he had acted with kindness and unselfishness towards her and the Trampleasures, and she respected his goodness, though she did not like its fashions.

After some desultory conversation, Mr. Flamank broached the subject of the Ho-ha mission. Mirelle at once became chilly.

When he asked her for a donation she declined to subscribe.

'You forget, I am a Catholic.'

'Not at all, my dear young friend, not at all. But this is distinctly a case of enlightenment, where all around is dark; and although Hokee-Pokee-Wankee-Fum may have embraced the tenets of the Particular Christians, still you must remember he is a Christian, and we are all travelling in the same direction.'

'Sir,' said Mirelle, 'as I was walking along the Bodmin road, I saw three children going along the same way and in the same direction as myself—only they were walking backwards. One tumbled into a furzebush on the right, another fell over the bank into a ditch on the left, and the third went under the hoofs of carthorses in the middle of the road. It would have been better for all those children not to have travelled along the road at all, than to have attempted it with perverted views.' Then she rose, bowed, and left the minister with Orange and her mother.

The next caller was Captain Trecarrel. Orange had been expecting him, and had given instructions to the servant on no account to admit him. Accordingly, when he called, neither the Countess nor the Tram-

pleasures were 'at home,' and the Captain was forced to depart, leaving three cards.

Orange took possession of the cards, tore them in half, and put them in an envelope.

'Dear Mirelle,' she said, 'I have been writing to Harry, poor fellow. He has been so troubled about our affairs that he has taken to his bed. He is seriously unwell. I have been writing full particulars to him of all that has taken place, but since my letter was finished I have sprained my hand, and cannot hold a pen. Would you mind directing the letter for me, dear?'

So the address was in Mirelle's handwriting. The letter was posted, and reached the Captain on the morrow.

'Now,' said Orange, 'he will be forced to keep his distance for a while, till I have time to look round.'

Orange was not satisfied. Mirelle was certain to go to Trecarrel for mass, when next the priest came that way, and then an explanation would follow. Orange did not understand how it was that Herring had bought in all the furniture in Mirelle's name, and had placed a sum in the bank to her account. She questioned Mirelle thereon.

'My dear, how comes it that you have so

much money? that you are able to do so much, and to live independently?'

'I do not know.'

'What has become of your diamond necklace and tiara? Have you sold them?'

'No, Mr. Herring keeps them for me. I do not want them now. I mean—for wear.'

'Mr. Herring has them!'

'Yes; I asked him to take care of them —that was before I knew they were paste.'

'But, perhaps they are not paste, but real diamonds, Mirelle.'

'What I gave you formed part of the set, and that was certainly paste.'

'Yes, that is true; but it is possible that the rest may have been genuine stones, in which case the value must be great.'

'I do not know, Orange.'

'But, my dear, whence comes the money lodged in the bank? Whence the money that bought all this furniture?'

'I do not know. I have not asked.'

'You ought to know. It is imperative on you to ascertain. Do you think that Mr. Herring has sold your diamonds for this purpose?'

'I am certain he has not. He would not dare to dispose of my mother's jewels without consulting me. I gave them to him to keep

for me. I did not authorise him to sell them.'

'Have you any means of which we know nothing ?—money not given to my father which you trusted to Mr. Herring along with the diamonds ?'

'No, Orange.'

'Has nothing been forwarded to you of his property from Brazil ?'

'No, Orange.'

'Then, whence comes this money ? I suppose Mr. Herring has spent a hundred and fifty pounds on the furniture. He has lodged a hundred pounds in the bank, and promises you as much quarterly.'

'Yes, it is so.'

'But, Mirelle, do you not see that, in this case, you are living on Mr. Herring's alms ! He is not a rich man. I have heard from my father about him. I do not believe he is worth more than six to seven hundred pounds a year, and he is giving you four out of the six or seven—nay, he has given you more.'

Mirelle looked before her. She had not thought of this before. Brought up without care of money, everything she had being paid for by her father, it had not struck her that she was now living on the bounty of one who was no relative.

'It is very good of Mr. Herring,' she said.

'My dear Mirelle, this must not go on.'

'Why not?'

'What right have you to accept and spend the money of Mr. Herring? He is no relative. You have no claim on him.'

Mirelle was uneasy. 'Why, then, has he done so much for me?'

'That is what I ask. Realise what this means. He is impoverishing himself to support you? What will the world say? What must it say? That which Mr. Herring is doing for you he has no right to do for any woman except a *wife*.'

Then Mirelle sprang to her feet trembling; she could not colour over brow and bosom like Orange, but two rosy tinges came into her cheeks. Her whole delicate frame quivered, and her eyes became dull. She placed her hands over her heart, and looked at Orange speechlessly.

'Yes,' said the latter, 'you cannot; what is more, you must not receive all this from a young man without having a shadow of claim upon him. The only claim you can have to justify the receiving of so much is the legitimate claim of a wife.'

'Have done!' gasped Mirelle, holding out her hand entreatingly.

'No, Mirelle, I must be plain with you. In this town it will soon be known that you are being supported in comfort by a young officer, who is neither a brother nor even a cousin. What conclusion will be drawn?'

'Orange,' said the girl, pleadingly, 'I pray you to be silent.'

'I will not be silent,' answered Orange. 'One of two things must be done; must, I say. Do you hear me, MUST. Either you give Mr. Herring a legitimate right to maintain you, or my mother and I leave this place and do not speak to you again.'

'I do not understand you,' said Mirelle. 'Why should you cast me off?'

Orange looked at her, and a scornful smile played over her lips. She was unable to believe in the purity and guilelessness of the soul before her. She thought Mirelle a hypocrite, and as a hypocrite she despised her.

'Oh! you want further explanation, do you? Learn then that it is not the custom in England for a woman of character to live on the generosity of a gentleman who is neither a husband nor a kinsman.'

'I see that I have no right to expect this of Mr. Herring. But he is so good, so generous, and so thoughtful, that he has not

considered himself, in his pity and solicitude for me. However, it shall not remain so. I will tell him that I cannot accept his liberality.'

'Or—that you can only accept it when he has given you legitimate claims on him.'

'I will not accept his liberality.'

'What is to become of us—of you—if he hears this from your lips? Remember, we have nothing. We must starve. You—what will you do?'

'I do not know.'

'Listen to me, Mirelle. There is only one thing that you can do. Next time Mr. Herring comes here, if he tells you that he loves you, and asks you to be his wife—accept him.'

'I cannot. Oh, I cannot!'

'You must do it. It is the only salvation for us and for you. Then, no one can say anything to his furnishing you with every penny of his income.'

Mirelle put her hands over her eyes. Orange watched her contemptuously. The girl was very still, but the tears oozed between her slender fingers and dripped on her lap.

'Have you been so blind as not to see that his heart is bound up in you? He has loved you from the beginning, and, you little

fool, you have not known it. He has done so much for you because he loves you. He cares nothing for us—my mother and me. He is a good and worthy man. Make him happy. Repay him for what he has done for you. You are not likely to find another who would make as trustworthy a husband. Do not sigh after the man in the moon ; he will not come down to you. Mr. Herring is a gentleman, an officer in His Majesty's army ; has a private fortune, not large, but enough to support a wife in comfort ; and he is honourable, truthful—and soft.'

Mirelle made no response.

'Now, suppose that you refuse him, and tell him, as you are bound to do, that because you refuse him you will no longer burden him for your support. What then ? Why, you and we are placed in precisely the same predicament we were in before. We shall have a sale here after all ; have to leave this house, and be adrift in the world. Will you hire yourself to be cook to Mrs. Trelake, or shall I recommend you as parlour-maid to Miss Bowdler, for her John Thomas to flirt with in the pantry ? This is not all. After everything that Mr. Herring has done for you, you cannot refuse him without being guilty of black ingratitude. Now, what do you say ?

There seems to me no option as to what your choice should be. But some persons do not know on which side their bread is buttered. Are you prepared to go into service? Shall I write you a character to Sophy Bowdler? clean, obliging, and steady; understands glass and china. There is really no alternative. Remember, also, that my mother and I depend on your election likewise. Reject Mr. Herring, and when you go to Miss Bowdler as parlour-maid, my mother becomes cook, and I, barmaid at an inn.'

Mirelle rose; she did not speak, but left the room with tottering feet, and her eyes so full that, to find her way, she felt about her with trembling hands. When she was gone, Orange laughed.

'Now,' said she, 'the next thing to be done is to bring that other fool here.' Then she wrote a note to Herring, requesting him to come to Launceston, as her mother and she wished to consult him on important business. She added in a postscript, 'Mirelle will be most happy to see you.'

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

A VIRGIN MARTYR.

In the privacy of her own room, by night, in the little garden house, her favourite refuge by day, Mirelle considered what Orange had said to her. She was hurt and offended by the manner in which Orange had spoken, without quite understanding why. Her refined nature winced before the rough touch of one coarse as Orange, not only because the touch was rude, but because it sullied.

Mirelle believed that Orange was her friend, a rude friend, but sincere. What had she done to convert her into an enemy ? She was not a friend to whom she could open her heart, and she had no desire to receive the outpourings of that of Orange. They were friends so far as this went, that each wished well to the other, and would do her utmost to promote each other's happiness.

Orange was the interpreter of the world's

voice to Mirelle, the guide through its mazes. That voice was odious to her, nevertheless she must hear it. Its ways were distasteful, nevertheless she must tread them. She knew nothing of the world, except what she had been taught in the convent. She believed it to be wicked and ungodly. The virgin martyrs had been cast to wild beasts, some had been devoured by leopards, others hugged by bears. The world was an arena in which she was exposed, and Orange the rough but kindly executioner who offered her a choice of martyrdom. An angel, a captain of the heavenly militia, with eyes blue as the skies of paradise, had been sent to stand by, and guard many a virgin ; but she, Mirelle, must endure her agony undefended, and see the angel stand by one who seemed rude and dauntless enough to fight the battle unaided.

King Alphonso X. of Castile said that, if he had been consulted at the creation of the universe, he would have made it much better; the sisters of the Sacred Heart had intimated as much in their instructions. In the first place they would have made a world without men, and that world would have remained a paradise. Men are the cankers that corrode the roses, the thorns that strangle the lilies in the garden of the Church, the moths that fret the gar-

ments of the saints, the incarnation of the destructive principle.

Mirelle remembered how her mother had suffered through union with Mr. Strange. She thought of Mr. Trampleasure, of Sampson —she really knew very few men, and those she knew were not of the best type. There was the Captain, indeed, but he was unattainable, and Herring was at least inoffensive and well-meaning. If she must be thrown to beasts, let her be cast to such a gentle beast as this. Hereafter, only, will there be no marrying nor giving in marriage, and women will be at peace; there, into that blessed country, the men, if admitted at all, will be like priests, wear petticoats and be shaven; above all, will be in such a minority that they will be obliged to keep their distance and adopt a submissive manner. Mirelle had a good deal of natural shrewdness, but no experience of life. Brought up in a convent, the only world she knew was the little world within four walls, in which the wildest hurricane that raged was occasioned by a junior appropriating the chair properly belonging to a senior, and the fiercest jealousies blazed when a father director addressed four words to Sister Magdalen of S. Paul, and only three to Sister Rose of the Cross. When she

had gone out, it was on visits to her mother, and there she had met very artificial old gentlemen, and still more artificial old ladies, persons who looked like pictures in illustrated story-books, and talked like the people she read of in the same books. She supposed that her board and education were paid for at the Sacré Cœur. She supposed so, she took it for granted. She considered it probable that those pupils who could afford, paid, and those who could not afford, were received gratuitously. The sisters never mentioned such matters, her mother never alluded to them, and Mirelle had scarce accorded such sordid cares a passing thought. Bread and instruction came to her as food and light to the birds; the birds take what is sent, and do not trouble their feathery heads about the how and whence. Now she was driven to consider how she might live, and whether it was right for her to subsist on alms, and those the alms of a gentleman who was no relation, and how, if these means were withdrawn or rejected, she was to live at all.

After much thought, little sleep, and many tears, she decided that she would accept John Herring.

She had made up her mind. Now, she

must obtain command of herself to go through the approaching ordeal with dignity.

As Orange had anticipated, her letter brought Herring to Launceston. He had gone to Welltown, his house in Cornwall on the coast, to look after his business there. He had let the farm, but he had a slate-quarry in the cliffs overhanging the sea, and he liked to keep an eye on it. This slate-quarry had been worked in a desultory manner, chiefly to supply local requirements, but Herring's ideas had expanded since he had seen the rise and fall of Ophir, and since he had embarked in silver lead, and he saw his way to an extension of the business. He knew that Bristol was a port where he could dispose of any amount of slate, if he were able to convey it thither. Below Welltown the cliffs rose sheer from the beach; that beach was a thin strip of sand, only to be reached by a dangerous path cut in the face of the rock. Welltown cove was to some extent sheltered from the roll of the Atlantic by a reef from Willapark, as a headland was called, which started out of the mainland into the ocean, and was gnawed into on both sides by the waves, threatening to convert it into an island.

Herring had a scheme in his head; he

thought to construct a breakwater on a continuation of the reef. Then he would be able to bring boats under the face of his slate-quarries, and lower the roofing stone upon their decks. The idea had not occurred to him before, because he had been poor and unable to command a few thousand pounds. But now he had Mirelle's diamonds to draw upon. He could invest her capital in his own slate-quarry as well as in Upaver lead mine, and benefit himself as well as Mr. Battishill. He would look after both investments himself. He would hold both the slate and the lead in his own hands. Mirelle's money would not only be safe, but would bring in rich dividends. Was he justified in acting thus—in speculating with the fortune of another without her knowledge and consent? He asked himself this question, and answered it in the affirmative. Without his seeking, Providence had thrust on him the charge of Mirelle's fortune, and he must do the best he could with it. Her father had done what he thought best, and every penny that had been intrusted to her guardians had been lost. Then Providence had overruled matters so as to constitute him her guardian. He would act justly by her. He was not self-seeking. It was true that the development

of the Welltown slate-quarry would improve his own fortune, but this thought influenced him far less than consideration how best to dispose of Mirelle's money. He would sink her diamonds in his slate, not because it was his slate, but because he knew the security and value of the investment. He was working for her, not for himself, to increase her fortune, not his own, to insure her a future, not himself. Thus it was for Mirelle that he was erecting machinery at Upaver and planning a breakwater at Welltown. In the midst of his schemes he received the letter of Orange, and the postscript made his heart leap. He had been too humble-minded to hope. Mirelle stood aloof from him, high above his sphere. She was to him the ideal of pure, beautiful, and saintly maidenhood, to be dreamed of, not aspired to, to be venerated, not sought. She had of late received him with more kindliness than heretofore, had put away her early disdain, and had treated him as an equal. There had transpired through face and manner something even of appeal to him. Was it possible that she had begun to regard him with liking, perhaps even with love? He was so modest in his estimation of himself that he blushed at the

thought—the audacious thought—that this was possible.

Herring posted to Launceston, and went at once to Dolbeare. Mirelle was in the little garden house as he passed. She saw him, and knew that the crisis in her life was come. He was admitted to Dolbeare, and sat with Mrs. Trampleasure and Orange for half an hour. The latter had discovered some important business requiring advice, and this was discussed; yet Herring saw plainly enough that this was not of sufficient importance to have made Orange summon him. Mr. Flamank could have advised her equally well. There was something behind. What that was Orange let him understand.

'And now,' said she, 'we must detain you no longer. Mirelle is in the summer-house. She likes to be alone, dear girl, and she wants to see you. You slipped away, on the occasion of our return hither, without awaiting her thanks. She has been troubled at this; she knows she owes you some return. Go and see her; she is expecting you, and angry with us for keeping you from her so long over our own poor affairs.'

Herring coloured. Orange had not a delicate way of putting things. He knew that Mirelle had not asked Orange to act as

intermediary between them, yet this was what the words and manner of Orange implied.

He bowed and withdrew.

Mirelle was awaiting him. She had been given time to school herself for the trial. Twilight had set in, and but for the fire that glowed on the hearth it would have been dark in the little room. The fire was of peat, without flame, colouring the whole room very red.

Mirelle rose from her seat and stepped forward to meet Herring. He looked her in the face. She was very pale; the colour had deserted even her lips, but the light of the burning turf disguised her death-like whiteness. As he took her hand he felt how cold it was; it trembled, and was timorously withdrawn the moment it had touched his fingers. His heart was beating tumultuously. Hers seemed scarce to pulsate; it was iced by her great fear and misery, and the strong compulsion she exerted to keep herself calm.

'I am glad to see you, Mr. Herring,' she said. She spoke first, and she spoke, as on a former occasion, like one repeating a lesson learned by heart. 'I was told that you were coming, and I have prepared myself to speak to you, and say what has to be said. You have been good to me, very good. You have

done more for me than I had any right to expect. I have no claim on you, save the claim which appeals to every Christian heart, the claim of the friendless and helpless. That is a great claim, I have been taught, the greatest and most sacred of all. But the world does not recognise it; it does not allow you permission to pour on me so many benefits. You have bought everything the house contains with your own money—for me. You have taken the lease of the house, and paid the rent out of your own purse—for me. You have undertaken to find me an income on which I can live in comfort; you rob yourself—for me.'

She paused a moment.

A conflict woke up in the mind of John Herring. Should he tell her all? Should he say that this was not true—he had used her money, not his own? If at that moment he had done so, that event which was to trouble and darken both their futures would not have occurred. Herring was young; he was without strength of character to decide in a moment what to do. He let the occasion slip. He would wait; the revelation could be made later. He did not understand the supreme importance of the moment. He did not realise to what Mirelle's words led.

'Countess,' he said——

'No,' she interrupted hastily, 'do not speak. You must let me say what I want. Il me faut me décharger le cœur. If I had been a nun at the head of an orphanage, I would have said Give all, and God on high will repay you. Give; no one will deny you the right, and I will accept with joy. I will be your almoner to the little ones of Christ. But, alas! it is not so. I can spend what you provide only on myself, and I do not find that this is right. In the world is one fashion, in religion is another fashion. You see well yourself it cannot be.'

'Countess, will you allow me to explain?'

'No; I need no explanation. One only question I ask, for there is one thing I desire greatly to know. That neck-chain and that coronet of diamonds, have you sold them?'

'No, I have them yet. You intrusted them to me.'

'They are false. Do you know the brooch you sent me for Orange was all of false stones —of paste? I doubt not the rest of the set is the same. Did you know this?'

'Certainly not. I have not examined and proved the stones. I had no suspicion that they were not genuine.'

'My father sent the set as a present to my

mother,' said Mirelle, 'and they were of paste.'

Herring was surprised.

'This cannot be, Countess; your father was a diamond merchant, and knew perfectly the false from the true. He could not have sent your mother what was worthless. The stones must have been changed later.'

'They were in my mother's keeping,' said Mirelle.

That was answer enough. Her father might be guilty of a mean act; her mother, never.

Herring had his own opinion, but he had the prudence not to express it.

'But enough about this,' Mirelle went on. 'I only asked for this reason. If you had sold my stones, supposing them to be real, and had used them to relieve me and the Trampleasures in the moment of our need, when we had not a house to cover our heads, I should have been very, very thankful.'

She said this with an involuntary sigh, and with such an intense expression of earnestness that Herring caught the words up, and said eagerly:—

'Do you mean this? Do you mean that you would have thanked me if I had sold

your diamonds and used the proceeds to relieve your necessities?'

'Yes, I do mean this.'

'Why did you not ask me to do this?'

'Because I supposed the stones were paste, and worthless.'

'Tell me, dear Countess Mirelle, if you had confided diamonds to me, knowing them to be diamonds, you would not be angry with me for selling them for this very purpose—to provide you with the means of living yourself, and of returning the kindness shown you by Mrs. Trampleasure and her daughter?'

'I would go down on my knees to thank you. I would be full of gratitude to you.'

He breathed freely; he had received his absolution. He had been justified in acting as he had done; Mirelle had approved of his conduct with her own lips. He had carried out her wishes. It was unnecessary for him to tell her all, now that he was certain that he acted as she would have him act.

But he did not read her heart. He did not understand the real significance of her words. She would indeed have been thankful to know that she had received her own money, so as to be free from all obligations to him—so as not to be forced to take the step the thought of which killed the life out of her

heart. That hope was gone—a poor hope, but still a hope. Nothing remained for her but the surrender; she must become a sacrifice.

'It was not so,' she went on sadly, 'I knew it was not so, for you would not have parted with my mother's set of stones without consulting me. No, Mr. Herring, I have not the poor pride of knowing I am my own mistress, and independent of every one. You have been to me a generous friend and a guardian when I needed assistance and protection.'

'Dear Countess Mirelle, I am ready still to act as your friend, your guardian, and your protector.'

'I know it, Mr. Herring, and I frankly accept your offer. I am willing that you should continue such for the rest of my life.'

'Countess!' Herring's voice shook; 'how happy, how proud you make me!'

'Let me speak,' she said. Then her heart failed her. She went to the fire, and rested her hands on the mantelpiece, folded as in prayer, and leaned her brow for a moment on them. The red glow of the fire smote upwards and illumined and warmed the face. She was praying. Her strength was ebbing away; the dreaded moment had come. 'O holy and innocent Agnes, pure lamb! Thou

who didst bow thy neck to the sword, intercede for me! O Cicely, thou whose heart was filled with heavenly music, making thee deaf to the voice of an earthly bridegroom, pray for me! O Dorothy, thou who didst pine for the lilies and roses of Paradise, plead for me!'

She raised her white brow from its momentary resting-place. The strength had come. The moment of agony had arrived, and she was nerved to pass through.

'Mr. Herring,' she spoke slowly, leisurely, 'I have no right to accept your offer, unless you confer on me the right—the only right——'

She could speak no more. Her white, quivering face, her sunken eyes, and uplifted hands that shook as with a palsy, showed her powerlessness to proceed.

Herring took a step forward. She drew back, shrinking before him as perhaps the martyr shrinks before the executioner.

'Stand there, I pray—oh, do not come nearer!' she pleaded, with pain in her voice.

'Mirelle, dear Mirelle!' he said; and then the pent-up love of his heart broke forth. He told her how he had loved her from the moment that he first saw her, how, hopeless of ever winning her, he had battled with his

love, how vain his efforts had been, and how his highest ambition was to live for her and make her happy. He spoke in plain, simple words, with the rough eloquence of passion and sincerity.

She listened to him, with her hands again on the mantelpiece, looking at him, with her dark eyes wide open, and the red glow of the fire in them. She did not follow his words, she heard them without comprehending them. She was full of her own grief and could think of nothing else.

She woke out of abstraction when he asked her, 'Mirelle, may I think myself so happy as to be able to count on your being mine?'

'I will be your wife,' she said.

'Oh, dear, dear Mirelle! My whole life shall be devoted to you. This is the happiest day I have ever known.'

'One thing I must say,' said she; 'you know I am a Catholic. I will never give up my faith. You will assure me perfect freedom to follow my own dear religion. I could live without everything, but not without that.'

He gave her the requisite assurance.

'You and I,' she said sadly, 'have not the same faith—that is, as far as I can see, you disbelieve in more than half of the verities

which are the very life of my soul. We cannot be united in the holiest and most beautiful of all bonds, which has eternity before it, to which both press on together. That cannot be. You go one way, I another. But as far as can be, I will be all that you will require.'

'You are everything I desire now. I have but to look at you, and I think I see a saint or angel from heaven.'

She put up her hand, and brushed his words away. They offended her. But they were sincere; there was no flattery in them. Mirelle was an ideal to Herring. Again he stepped forward. He would take her hands, he would kiss colour and heat into those cold and faded lips. He had a right to do this. Was she not about to become his wife?

But again she drew back, and in a tone of mingled terror and entreaty said, 'Oh, Mr. Herring, I pray you do not come nearer to me. I am so frightened and bewildered. The thoughts that rise up beat my temples and contract my heart. I have gone through a great deal to-day. I have said that I will be your wife. Do not exact of me more than I can bear. Do not press the advantage you have gained over me, I entreat you. You are kind and considerate. I am not very strong,

and I think not very well. Leave me to myself, I pray you ; go away now. If I have made you happy, I am glad of it; let my promise suffice. Come here to-morrow, if you will. No, no'—again with her fear overmastering her, she grasped at a respite—'not to-morrow. I shall not be sufficiently myself to receive you. The day after will do. Then I shall have more strength to speak to you about the future. Not now. I pray you leave me alone now.'

'Will you not even give me your hand?'

She hesitated, then timidly drew near, with her large eyes on him full of anxiety, and she held out the long shaking white fingers. He kissed them. They were cold as the fingers of the dead.

'I shall return the day after to-morrow,' he said.

'I shall be ready then to receive you,' she replied.

He went out. Then, when she knew that she was alone, at once all her strength gave way, and she fell on her knees, clasping her hands together, swaying her body in the agony of her pain, and broke into a storm of tears.

Mirelle did not keep her word to Herring. She was unable to do so. That night she was

attacked by a nervous fever, and became delirious. The strain had been too great for her delicate system.

Herring called, and heard how ill she was. He did not leave Launceston ; he remained till the crisis was past.

The doctors were uncertain what turn her illness would take, and how to treat one constituted so differently from their run of patients. In this uncertainty they did nothing, and, because they did nothing, Mirelle recovered.

There was a natural elasticity in her youth which triumphed over the disease.

Orange sat up with her, night after night. She would allow no one else to share the burden with her till Mirelle's delirium was over.

During the height of the fever, Mirelle talked. Orange stayed with her, not out of love for her cousin, but out of fear lest others should discover, from the rambling talk of Mirelle, the secret which she alone possessed. The name of Trecarrel was often on the lips of Mirelle ; she prayed, and broke off in the midst of a prayer to speak of Trecarrel. At the same time she seemed oppressed by a great terror, and she cried out to be saved from what was coming. Not once did the name of John Herring pass her lips.

When, at length, Mirelle was well enough to be moved downstairs, then Herring was admitted to see her. He had repeatedly sat before, by the hour, with Mrs. Trampleasure or with Orange, talking of the poor girl lying ill upstairs.

'She has been delirious,' said Orange, 'and, if it were not unfair, I could tell you how often your name——'

'It is unfair,' interrupted Herring, 'and I decline to listen.'

'As you like,' said Orange, shrugging her shoulders; and, as she left the room, she sneered.

When John Herring saw Mirelle at last, he could hardly command his tears, she looked so thin and transparent; her eyes were very large and bright, her face like ivory. She held out her hand to him. He scarce ventured to touch it. She seemed to him like the ghost-moth which, when grasped by the hand, vanishes, leaving only silvery plumes sprinkled over the fingers.

He kissed the wasted hand with reverence and love, not with passion, and Mirelle smiled.

'Mr. Herring,' she said, 'I have had a long time to myself, whilst I have been ill, in which to prepare my thoughts. What must be—must be, and may be soon. It is

now Advent, a season in which it is forbidden by the Church to marry ; but I will be yours as soon after Christmas as you like. Do not doubt. When I am your wife I will do my duty.'

CHAPTER XXXIX.

WELLTOWN.

JOHN HERRING returned to Welltown. There was much to occupy him there. He must prepare the house to receive its mistress. He must get what he could ready for the extension of the slate-quarry. The breakwater could not be begun in winter, but the stone could be quarried for it among the granite of Row-tor, and the head taken off where the slate was to be worked.

Welltown was a bleak spot. It stood against a hill, only a little way in from the head of the cliffs. The hill had been quarried for the stone of which the house was built, and then the end of the house had been thrust into the hole thus scooped. The hill rose rapidly, and its drip fell over the eaves of the old quarry about the walls of the house. If the hill had been to seaward it would have afforded some shelter, but it was

on the inland side, and the house was therefore exposed to the raging blasts, salt with Atlantic spray, that roared over the bare surface of the land. Not a tree could stand against it, not a shrub, except privet and the so-called teaplant. Larches shot up a few feet and lost their leaders; even the ash died away at the head, and bore leaves only near the ground. A few beech-trees were like broken-backed beggars bent double.

Day and night the roar of the ocean filled the air, the roar of an ocean that rolled in unbroken swell from Labrador, and dashed itself against the ironbound coast in surprise and fury at being arrested; beneath its stormy blows the very mainland quivered.

Welltown was an old house, built at the end of the sixteenth century by a certain Baldwin Tink, who cut his initials on the dripstone terminations of the main entrance. The Tinks had owned the place for several generations, yeomen aspiring to become gentlemen, without arms, but hoping to acquire a grant. Baldwin had built one wing and a porch, and proposed in time to erect another wing, but his ability to build was exhausted, and none of his successors were able to complete the house; so it remained a queer lopsided erection, the earnest of a handsome

mansion unfulfilled. Baldwin Tink was an ambitious man; he expected to be able to form a quadrangle, and pierced his porch with gateways opposite each other, so that the visitor might pass through into the court-yard, and there dismount in shelter. But as he was unable to add a second wing to the front, so was he also unable to complete his quadrangle ; and the porch served as a gathering place for the winds, whence they rushed upstairs and through chambers, piping at keyholes, whizzing under doors, extinguishing candles, fluttering arras. The windows were mullioned and cut in granite, the mullions heavy and the lights narrow. The porch was handsomely proportioned and deeply moulded, but as want of funds had prevented Baldwin Tink from completing his exterior, so had it prevented him from properly furnishing the house inside. The staircase was mean, provisional, rudely erected out of wreck timber, and the unpanelled walls were plastered white. As the rain drove against the house, fierce, pointed as lances, it smote between the joints of the stones, and, though the walls were thick, penetrated to the interior and blotched the white inward face with green and black stains. There was no keeping it out. When the house was built, nothing was known of

brick linings, and the only way in which the builders of those days treated defects was to conceal them behind oak panelling. Poverty forbade this at Welltown, and so the walls remained with their infirmities undisguised. Our readers may have seen a grey ass on a moor in a storm of hail. The poor brute is unable to face the gale, and therefore presents his hinder quarters to it, and if there be a rock or a tree near, the ass sets his nose against it, and stands motionless with drooping ears, patiently allowing his rear to bear the brunt. Welltown presented much this appearance—a dead wall was towards the sea, and the head of the house was against the hill. The furiousness of the gales from the south and west prevented Baldwin Tink facing his house so as to catch the sun in his windows, and the only casement in the entire house through which a golden streak fell was that of the back kitchen.

What the house would have been when completed can only be conjectured; as it was, it was picturesque, but dreary to the last degree.

The Tinks had long since passed away from Welltown. The final representative of the family, unable to complete the house, sold the estate. With the proceeds he started a

drapery shop at Camelford, and died a rich man. Political economists lament the extinction of the old race of English yeomen, and advocate the creation of a race of peasant proprietors. A natural law has fought against the yeoman, and will forbid the spread of peasant proprietorships. The capital that is sunk in land produces two and a half per cent., that sunk in trade brings in ten, twenty, twenty-five per cent. The young yeoman had rather sell his paternal acres to the squire and invest the purchase-money in business, than struggle on upon the farm all his life, without the prospect of becoming, in the end, more wealthy than when he started.

Welltown passed through one or two hands, and then came to the Herrings, who occupied it for three generations, and, having married women with a little money, had got on some little way, not far, in the social scale. The slate-quarry had brought in money, not much, for the demand was limited. The neighbourhood was thinly populated, and little building was done. But the equinoctial gales came to the assistance of the Herrings, for after every gale carts came for slates to repair the devastation done to roofs by the wind. The sale of slates enabled the Herrings to enlarge their dairy by the purchase of

additional cows. They salted their butter, and sent it in firkins to Bristol by the little boats that plied up the Channel from the port of Boscastle.

John Herring had let the farm, on his father's death, to an old hind, Hender [1] Benoke, who had married John's nurse, Genefer ; and this couple lived in the house, and when he was there attended to him.

Now that Herring was interested in the slate-quarry, he built himself an office near it, on the cliff above a deep gulf called Blackapit, gnawed by the waves in the headland of Willapark. In this office were a fireplace and a bed.

Welltown had to be done up to receive the bride, and whilst it was in the hands of plasterers, carpenters, and painters, Herring lived in his office by the slate-quarry. He was comfortable and independent there. Genefer came there every day to attend to his wants ; but he dined at Welltown in the evening, after the quarrymen had left work.

One morning, after Genefer had made his breakfast, she stood beside the table, with her hands folded, watching him.

Genefer Benoke was a handsome woman

[1] Hender is the modern Cornish form of Enoder. There was a Cornish saint of the name. Genefer is Gwenever.

still, though over fifty. She had very thick brown hair, high cheekbones, a dark complexion, and large, wild, pale grey eyes. She was a tall, well-built woman, abrupt in manner and capricious in temper. Hender, her husband, was a gloomy, sour man, always nursing a grievance and grumbling against some one ; a man who considered himself wronged by every one with whom he dealt ; by his master, who treated him liberally ; by his wife, whom, however, he feared ; by his workmen, because they were idle. He was dragged by his wife to chapel, and he grumbled because he was obliged to pay for his pew, and he was angry with the minister because he was making a good thing out of the credulity of his congregation. He was jealous of the storekeepers at Boscastle, because they were making unfair profit on their goods. He was sulky with his pigs because they ran to bone rather than to fat, and with his poultry because they laid their eggs where they were not readily found. He growled at his Bible because the printing was too small for his eyes, and was bitter against his clothes because they wore out.

Genefer was a strange woman. The Keltic blood in her veins was pure. A wild, dreamy woman, who had acted as white witch till she

thought the profession sinful and had given it up, to throw herself with all the vehemence of her nature into one of those fantastic forms of dissent that thrive so vigorously on Keltic soil. She prophesied, she saw visions, and dreamed. None hunted the devil with more vehemence and pertinacity than Genefer Benoke—the devil-hunting with her was no pretence ; she saw him, she smelt him, and she pursued him, now with a broom, then with her bare hands.[1] She went into fits, she had the 'jerks,' she foamed at the mouth, she rolled on the floor and shrieked, and exhibited all the outward signs of a regenerate and converted person.

There was no hypocrisy in her. If there had been the least tinge of unreality, her husband would have fastened on it, and her power over him would have been at an end. But her trances and fits and visions were real, and he regarded her as a person of superior spiritual powers, almost inspired, gifted with supernatural clearness of vision.

'Master John,' said Genefer, 'you've a-told me sure enough why there be all that havage (disturbance) in the old house, fit to

[1] Devil-hunting is a favourite feature among some of the wilder sects in Cornwall. Very extraordinary scenes may be witnessed at one of these chases.

worry a saint of God out of life, what with the smeech (smell) of paint, and the hammerings, and the sawings, and the plasterings. You've a-told me, right enough, that there be a new mistress coming, and I be not that footy to go against it. The Lord said, "It is not good for man to be alone," and that settles the matter ; but I want to know what she be like.'

'Oh, dear Jenny, she is everything that she ought to be. You may take my word for that.'

'Ah ! all fowl be good fowl till you come to pluck 'em. There be maidens and maidens, and you must not take 'em by what they purfess, but by what they be. When the Lord were by the Sea of Tiberias, He seed a poor man coming out of the tombs, exceeding fierce, and He axed, What be thy name ? Then he answered, Legion, which means six thousand. But the Lord knowed better than that, and He sed, sed He, "Come out of him thou one unclean spirit, and go into the swine." Ah ! if you listen to what they sez of themselves, they be Legion—six thousand. Loramussy ! with their airs and their graces, and their good looks, and their fortune, and their learning, and their pianny-playing, and their flower-painting, and this and that—

they'd make you believe they was possessed with a legion of graces, but when you come to get hold and look close, there be naught there but one mean and selfish spirit, bad enough to make a pig mazed.'

'My dear Jenny, I hope and trust your future mistress will please you, but you don't expect that I should put the choosing into your hands.'

'I don't that 'xactly, Master John. No, I don't go so far as that. But you might have done worse. There be none but a woman as can see into a woman. It be just the same as with the Freemasons. They knows one another wherever they be, and in the midst of a crowd ; but you as bain't in the secret have no idea how. It be just the same with women. Us knows one another fast enough, and what is hid from you men be clear to we. There were a battle against Ephraim, and the men of Gilead took the passages of Jordan, and when the Ephraimites were a-flying, then said the Gileadites to 'em, "Say Shibboleth !" and they said Sibboleth, for they could not frame to pronounce it right. So they took them and slew them there. I tell you, Master John, there don't at no time meet two women wi'out one putting the Shibboleth to the other and finding out whether

her belongs to Ephraim or Gilead. I'd like to know of the missis as be coming what her be like, but I know very well it be no good my axing of you. You've not took her down to the passages of Jordan and tried her there.'

'Ask me what I can tell you, and I will satisfy you to the best of my power.'

'Master John, it be a false beginning papering the porch room with white and gold. The bare whitewash were good enough for your mother and your grandmother, and it would be good enough for your wife, I reckon, if her were of the proper sort. And if her be not, let her take herself off from Welltown. Will you tell me this, Master John ; be she a Cornish woman ?'

'No, Jenny, I do not think she is.'

'Be she strong and hearty, wi' brave red rosy cheeks and a pair of strong arms?'

'She is slender and pale, Jenny.'

'A fine wife that for Welltown! Pale and weak: that be as I dreamed. But it were no dream—it were a revelation. What sort be her as to her religion? Be her a Churchwoman, or one of God's elect?'

'That is an unfair way of putting it,' laughed Herring.

'I put it the way it be written in the Book of Light,' answered Genefer, doggedly.

'She is a Roman Catholic,' said Herring. 'I hope now you are satisfied.'

'See there!' exclaimed Genefer. 'What sez the Scriptur?—"Thou shalt not plough with the ox and the ass together." What do that mean but that two of a sort should run together under the same yoke of matrimony? If you be Church, take a Church wife; if you be a Cornishman, don't fetch an ass out of Devon to plough the lands of Welltown wi' you. What sez the prophet?—"Can two walk together except they be agreed?" Here be you two arn't agreed about what be chiefest of all, and how will you walk together along the way of life?'

'My dear Jenny, you have had the management so long that you presume. I am not any longer a boy to be ordered about, and I must insist on no more of this sort of interference with my affairs. You acted as a mother to me when I was deprived as an infant of my own natural mother, and I shall ever love you dearly for all you have done for me. But, Jenny, there are limits to forbearance, and you transgress.'

'Ah, sure!' exclaimed Genefer Benoke, 'it were I as made you what you 'm be. I didn't spoil you as some would have done. You 'm a good and proper squire, because I

trained the sapling. "Spare the rod, spoil the child," said the wise king. Master John, when the old miners were seeking a lode they took a hazel-rod in their hands, and they went over the ground a holding of thicky. And when they passed above a lode the rod turned in their hands. It were all the same wi' hidden treasure. I've a heard of a Trevalga man, as he went over the mounds of Bosinney wi' such a divining-rod, and it turned, and he dug and found King Arthur's golden crown and table. It be all the same with mortal earth. If you want to bring to light the pure ore, the hidden treasure, you must go over it wi' a stick. There be good metal in you, Master John, and you may thank your old nurse that her didn't spare the rod. Her explored you pretty freely with the divining-wand.'

'I am thankful, Genefer,' said Herring, laughing; 'I recall many of these same explorations, and they have left on me an ineffaceable respect for you, and some fear is mingled with the love I bear you.'

'It is right it should be so. What 'ud you have been without me? Your mother died when you was a baby. Your father couldn't be a nursing of you by night and day. It were I as did all that. I'd had

a chance child,'—in a self-exculpatory tone, 'the lambs o' the Lord must play;' then louder: 'and I'd a lost it. I did everything for you, I were a proper mother to you, and so it be that I love you as my own child; and as the Lord has not seen fit to give me none of my own body, saving that chance child as died—and I reckon the stock of Hender be too crabbed and sour to be worth perpetuating—what have I to live for, and care for, and provide for, but you? And see this, Master John. King David said as the Lord rained snares out of heaven: snares be ropes with nooses at the end; and King David sez the Lord hangs these out of every cloud, whereby them as walks unawares may hang themselves. What be them hangman's ropes dangling about, thick as rain-streaks, but all those things God has made, and with which he surrounds us, by which we may lift ourselves above the earth if we be prudent; but if we be fools, then we shall strangle ourselves therein. I reckon the new mistress be one of the Lord's snares hanging down out of heaven. If you use a wife properly, and lay hold of her, and pull yourself up by her, then you will mount to heaven; but if you let her get round your throat, her'll sure to throttle you. That be what makes me badwaddled' (troubled)

'about you, now I see you wi' such a rope before you. Keep your feet and hands a working up her, and don't you never let her knot herself round you.'

Such was the house and such were the persons destined to receive Mirelle. John Herring loved Welltown; he had been born there and bred there. Every stone was dear to him. The dreary scenery was full of romance and beauty because associated with early memories. Old Genefer he loved; she had been his nurse, his guide, his friend. She was masterful, and exercised the authority of a mistress; but this had grown with years, and was at first endured, at last disregarded. It had become a part of Welltown, and was sacred accordingly. Herring was too full of content with his own home, of admiration for the barren coast scenery, to suppose that the same would not equally delight Mirelle. He would explain to Mirelle the good points in Genefer's character, the greatness of the debt due to her, and for the sake of these she would overlook her faults.

Alas! the place and the persons that were to receive Mirelle were the most uncongenial to her nature that could have been selected.

But to return to the office on Willapark,

and Genefer standing at the table before her foster child.

'I told you,' said the old woman, 'that I had dreamed; but it weren't a dream, but a vision, falling into a trance, but having my eyes open. I thought, Master John, that it were a wisht' (wild) 'night, and the wind were a tearing and a ramping over the hills and driving of the snow before it in clouds. And I saw how that, in the whirl of the wind, the snow heaped herself up like the pillar of salt between Zoar and Sodom. And I saw how you, Master John, thought it were wonderful and beautiful, that you stood before it mazed. And when the night were gone, and the sun came out, and it glittered like a pillar of diamonds, then you cast your arms round it, to hold it to your heart; and you looked up to it for all the world as though expecting something as never came and never could come. And you laid your heart against that pillar of snow, and when I would have drayed you away you sed, "See, Jenny, how fair and pure she be!" But I could not take you away; and still you looked up into the snow, asking wi' your eyes for something that never came, and in nature never could come. But wi' the warmth of your heart it all began to melt away; and still you looked; and it ran

between your fingers, and dripped in streams from your heart, and trickled down your face like tears ; and so it thawed slowly away, and still you held to the snow, and looked, and nothing came. That be the way the heat went out of your heart, and the colour died from your cheek, and your lips grew dead, and your hands stiff, and the tears on your cheeks were frosted to icicles, and your hair waxed white as wool ; and when all had melted clean away still you was the same, wi' your arms stretched out and your eyes uplifted—not now to the snow bride, for that were gone, but to a star that twinkled aloft over where she had been, and I touched you, for I were troubled, but could not move you—you were hard ice.'

CHAPTER XL.

NOEL! NOEL!

CHRISTMAS had come, not a day of frost or snow, but of warm south breezes charged with rain; no sun shining, but grey light struggling through piles of vapour. Mirelle was so much better that she was able to go in a coach to Trecarrel to mass. A priest was staying there for a few days.

The mass was early, and she left before dawn, but the day broke while she was at Trecarrel, and there was as much light in the sky, when she prepared to leave, as there would be throughout the day.

Captain Trecarrel came to her, to insist on her coming into the house and having some breakfast. It would not do for her, in her delicate condition, recovering from illness, to remain so long without food. She declined, gently, and the utmost he could bring her to accept was a cup of coffee and some bread,

brought to the carriage in which she had seated herself, wrapped in shawls, for her return journey.

Captain Trecarrel, standing at the coach-door, thought her lovelier than he had ever seen her. There was none of the proud self-reliance in her face now that had marked her when she first came to Launceston. She was thin, tremulous, and frail as a white harebell ; with a frightened, entreating look in her large dark eyes, a look that seemed to confess weakness, and entreat that she might be left to herself.

Captain Trecarrel knew nothing about her engagement to John Herring. If it had been known in Launceston, it would have come to his ears, for the Captain was a great gossip. The secret had been well kept ; it was not only not known, it was unsuspected. Orange had not spoken of it, and her mother had been restrained from cackling by sharing in the general ignorance.

'In case I do not see you before the new year, I must wish you a happy one,' said Mirelle, holding out her hand. 'Now, please tell the coachman to drive on.'

'The year can hardly be happy for me,' said the Captain, and sighed. 'Dear Countess Mirelle, suffer me to take a place beside you.

I want to go into Launceston on business, and I shall be grateful for a lift.'

'Business to-day! Do not these English keep the feast? I have heard Orange and her mother anticipate Christmas, but almost wholly because of the plum-pudding.'

'The bells are ringing,' answered Trecarrel. And on the warm air came a merry peal of village bells. Captain Trecarrel saw the supplicating look in her eyes, a look entreating him not to take advantage of her weakness; but he was too selfish to regard it, he accepted her silence as consent, jumped into the chaise, and told the coachman to drive on.

There was no sign in the manner of either that a thought was given to the return of the visiting cards. That was Christmas day, a day of joy and reconciliation, of peace on earth, and general goodwill. Why rip up a sore? Let the past be forgotten, at least for a day. Captain Trecarrel was puzzled about those cards. Were they Mirelle's answer to the letter he had written to her? His offer of protection under the wing of his aunt at Penzance had been unnecessary, because Mirelle was not penniless. She had means at her disposal of which he knew nothing. Probably her father's money in Brazil had been forwarded to her,

and reached her, fortunately, after the death of her trustee.

Trecarrel was not a man to love deeply any one but himself. His feelings for Orange had never been strong ; if he cared for any one beside himself, it was for Mirelle. Had he offended her by his letter ? Was it really she who had sent the cards back to him ? He was determined to find out.

'You directed a letter to me some weeks ago,' he said.

'Yes ; Orange had sprained her wrist, and she asked me to address the letter for her.'

'I was disappointed on opening it. I knew your handwriting at once ; it was so unlike that of an Englishwoman, so French in its neatness. An Englishwoman scrawls, a Frenchwoman writes.'

'I have noticed that.'

'I was disappointed on opening the cover. I thought it might contain your reply to my letter.'

'What letter ?'

'That which I wrote to you when you were at Mr. Flamank's house.'

'I did not receive it.'

'The loss is not great. It was sent to inform you that I was confined to my bed, and that I was too gravely indisposed to

follow the dictates of my heart and fly to your succour.'

'Orange, I am sure, felt your absence greatly.'

'You, also, would have been thankful for my assistance, surely.'

'Yes; but I had no right to expect it. Orange had a right to exact it.'

Trecarrel bit his lip.

'You seem, dear Countess, to have been very ill. You look terribly fragile and white.'

'I have been unwell——'

'More than unwell—ill; dangerously ill?'

'Yes; my head was bad. I did not know anything or any person for several days.'

'I fear these wretched troubles have been the cause. O that I could have been near to give advice and protection; but important business—military, of course—called me to Exeter, and when I returned to Trecarrel, I was prostrated by a nervous attack for a week. I fear you have been embarrassed for money, but now, I understand, matters are settled agreeably.'

'We are not troubled about money matters any more, nor likely to be so.'

'I trust not.'

'Because, if you were, I would say,

command me. I am not a rich man, but still, bless my soul, I can help a friend at a pinch, and am proud to do so.'

'There is no occasion, Captain Trecarrel. All fear of pecuniary embarrassment is at an end.'

'I hear everything at Dolbeare was bought by you.'

'All was bought in my name.'

'And the Trampleasures, *mère et fille*, are your guests. How long will this continue?'

'I do not know.'

'It is not pleasant to be sponged on, especially——'

'I beg your pardon. I feel it a duty and a pleasure to do everything I can for them. They have been kind to me.'

'Then you saddle yourself with them indefinitely. I hope the load will not crush you.'

Mirelle made no reply. She did not like the contemptuous tone in which he spoke of the Trampleasures, and Orange was to be his wife. She looked out of the coach window on her side.

'Old Tramplara's death was, of course, a great shock to me,' continued Trecarrel; 'so sudden, too, arresting me on the threshold of my marriage. It was a trial to my nervous

system ; but I am frank to confess, it was to some extent a relief.'

Mirelle looked round with surprise.

'I may as well tell you the whole truth,' said the Captain. 'You are in the midst of cross purposes, and do not understand the game. It is only fair that I should give you your orientation. I always admired Orange ; she is a handsome, genial girl, somewhat brusque and wanting in polish, but good-hearted. I called a good deal at Dolbeare, not only to see her, but to keep Mr. Trampleasure in good humour. I am a man of very small income and with good position in the county, which I am expected to live up to. I have been pinched for money, and I wanted Mr. Trampleasure to advance me a loan. So I got on intimate terms with the family, and, somehow, he made my prospects contingent on my taking Orange as wife. Then the sum I wanted would be given as her dower. You understand. Well, being a light-hearted, giddy young fellow, I fell into the arrangement, and all went smoothly enough till you came.'

Mirelle gasped for breath. She put her hand to the window.

'You want air,' said the Captain. 'I will let down the glasses.'

Mirelle thanked him with a bend of the

head; she could not speak. A great terror had come over her.

'When you came,' continued Trecarrel, 'then I woke to the fact that I had never loved Orange. I had admired her beauty as I might admire a well-built horse or spaniel, but my heart had not been touched.'

'Oh, Mr. Trecarrel!' exclaimed Mirelle, putting her white fingers together, 'let me out of the carriage. I must walk; I shall faint; I feel very ill.'

'Dear Mirelle—you will let me call you Mirelle?—you must not walk; you are not strong enough.'

'I pray you! I pray you!'

Then he stopped the coach, opened the door, and had the steps lowered.

'The lady is faint. Go slowly, coachman. She wishes to walk a little way.'

Then he helped Mirelle to alight, and pressed her fingers as he did so, and looked at her tenderly out of his beautiful blue eyes.

'No,' she said, as he offered her his arm, 'I must walk alone. The road is rough. I shall be better presently. The carriage jolts.'

'You cannot walk,' answered the Captain; 'I see that you have not the strength. I insist on your taking my arm, or stepping back into the carriage. am very thankful

that I came with you. You are not in a fit state to be alone.'

She turned and looked at him. 'Oh, Mr. Trecarrel, I should have been far better alone.'

'Why so, Mirelle?'

'I cannot say. I need not have talked.'

'Do not talk now; listen, whilst I speak to you.'

'Speak then of something else—not of Orange.'

'I do not wish to speak of Orange. I will speak only of yourself.'

She held up her hands again, in that same entreating manner. 'I am too weak,' she whispered.

Her ankle turned as she stepped on the loose stones. A mist drifted across her eyes, so that she could not see the road. The air was rich with the music of church bells, the merry Christmas peal of Launceston tower and the village churches round, calling and crying, Noel! Noel! Noel! Glad tidings of great joy! Roast beef and plum pudding and mince-pies! Good Christian men rejoice! Pudding sprigged with holly, and over the pudding brandy sauce, blazing blue! Noel! Roast beef garnished with horse-radish! Noel! Mince-pies piping hot. Turn again,

Whittington, to your Christmas dinner. Noel! Noel! Noel!

Mirelle did not hear the bells.

'No, I cannot walk,' she said.

Then Captain Trecarrel helped her back into the coach.

'I shall be better alone,' she said.

'You must not be left alone,' he replied. 'I cannot in conscience allow you to go on without me to look after you. As you are so weak after your illness, it was madness to come out this Christmas morning.'

She sighed and submitted. He stepped in beside her and closed the door.

'Mirelle,' he said, 'I will not be interrupted in what I was saying, because I have determined to throw my mind and heart open to you. I dare say you have wondered how my engagement to Orange hung fire. I was bound to her, but my heart was elsewhere. You cannot understand the distressing situation in which I found myself, bound in honour to hold to an engagement which I detested, when all my hopes of happiness lay in another direction. You do not know what it is to be tied to one person and to love another. It is now many months since I first saw you, and the more I have seen of you the deeper, the more intense has been my love for

you, and my repugnance towards a marriage with Orange. You and I are one in sympathies, in rank, and in faith. We understand each other; we are, as it were, made to constitute each other's happiness.'

Mirelle put her hand on the Captain's arm, and tried to speak—to avert what he was saying; but the words died on her tongue. She trembled helplessly. Then she clasped her hands, and wrung them on her lap, despairingly. Speak she could not; but if Trecarrel had looked into her face, he would have seen the agony of her soul, and how she implored him, with her terrified eyes and her quivering lips, to forbear. He did not look. If he had, and read that appeal, it would not have stayed him.

'I did not venture to declare to you—no, not even to allow you to suspect—what was passing within me. I am a gentleman of high and honourable feelings. I knew that I had allowed myself, through inadvertence, to become entangled in an engagement to a person whom I could regard, but could not love. All at once I became aware that my heart was elsewhere. I proceeded, however, as an honourable man, to fulfil that which I had undertaken. What my misery was, you can ill conceive. I saw the fatal day approach

with feelings of disgust and despair. That day would bind me for life to an uncongenial companion, and separate me for ever from her whom I felt, whom I knew, to be essential to my happiness. Is it a marvel that, when circumstances occurred which arrested the marriage, I felt relief? Is it to be wondered at that now I feel a doubt whether I ought to go further in this matter? Ask yourself, am I further tied—in duty—in honour? Can I conscientiously marry a girl whom I do not love, whom I have even come to regard with repugnance, with whom I can never be happy, and whose whole life will be embittered by the knowledge that though she has my name and my hand, she has not gained my heart? No, Mirelle; dear, dearest Mirelle, no!'

'Stay—in heaven's name, stay!' gasped Mirelle. 'You must not speak to me thus.'

'Why not?'

'I must ask you a question,' she said, and wiped the cold dew from her lips and brow. 'I must ask of you a favour.'

'Ask me anything; it is yours.'

'Captain Trecarrel, this is Christmas Day. After eight days I shall belong to another. I ask you—allow me to be married in Trecarrel Chapel.'

Her heart beat so fast that it took away her breath. She was unable to proceed.

Captain Trecarrel's blue eyes opened with amazement. He could not believe his ears.

'I shall be married to—John Herring.'

Then she sank back in the coach, and threw her handkerchief over her face. The wheels rattled over the pavement of the street.

'Stop!' shouted the Captain. 'Damnation! stop!'

He got out. 'Drive on hard to Dolbeare, coachman; the young lady has fainted.'

So the coach rattled through the market-place and along the High Street, whilst the bells rang merrily, merrily, Glad tidings of great joy! Roast beef and plum pudding and mince-pies to those who can afford it; to the poor—nothing.

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.

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